

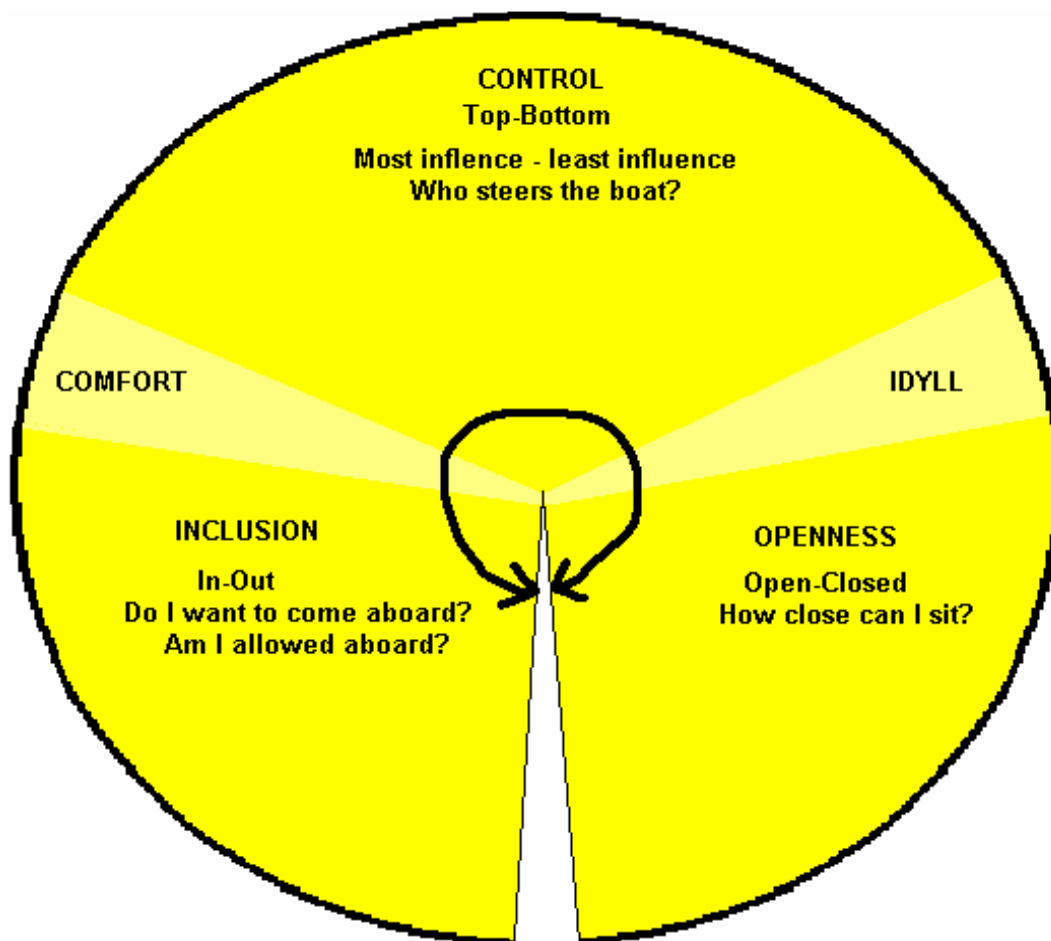
The FIRO theory applied on groups

In the early 1950's, the US Navy verified that the efficiency of different groups varied a lot, though they could not say why. For example, huge differences were found between different command rooms aboard war ships, though all groups were organized identically and all personnel were appointed from the same criteria.

Will Schutz, an American psychologist, was drafted into the Korean War and asked that the Navy make use of his education. He was asked to study what makes teams compatible and given free rein and financial support to do this. His work, during which he developed the psychometric instrument FIRO-B and the FIRO-theory, began in 1952 at the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington and then moved to Harvard and the Social Relations Department. The FIRO theory has been revised a few times but the basic phases are still as relevant as before.

Through his research within the US Navy, Schutz found that a group moves through three main phases to be able to reach full efficiency and unanimity – the Inclusion Phase, the Control Phase and the Openness Phase. The development is cyclic and the phases must be experienced in the order mentioned.

A group having reached Openness Phase will occasionally fall back to the Control or Inclusion Phase. The reasons could be a new work-task, a new member or an old member leaving the team. The more mature the group, the shorter the time needed to return to the Openness Phase.



Survey of phases

Inclusion Phase

<i>Focus:</i>	Membership (in or out)
<i>Interactions:</i>	Encounter
<i>Basic feeling:</i>	Dependence
<i>Questions:</i>	Am I accepted? Do I accept the other members? Do I fit in? Who are the other members? Do I want to join them? May I join them?
<i>Behaviour:</i>	Talk excessively or become too outgoing Withdrawal Recitation of previous experience Exhibitionism Check on the competence of members and leaders Question the goal and the existence of the group

What happens during the Inclusion Phase?

MEMBERS

- Try to get to know each other
- Question values
- Are very polite towards each other
- Try to foresee the expected behaviour from other members
- Form an emotional platform from which future lines of action will spring

- Express a great need for acceptance
- Show little or no need to find a group identity
- Try to avoid handling conflicts, especially serious ones
- Try to interpret non-verbal messages
- Express a need to understand the goals and rules of the group

- Ask for structure and order
- Take few personal risks
- Frequently depend on the leader
- Show their insecurity about whether to belong to the group or not
- Suggest different group activities, most of them never to be followed up
- Participate in endless discussions leading nowhere
- Are unwilling to talk about their "hidden motives"
- Try to answer the questions:
 - why am I here?
 - is this the right group for me?
 - can I function in this group?
 - how much of myself will I devote?
 - what will be expected of me?
 - what rules will apply?

Inclusion behaviour is defined as behaviour directed toward the satisfaction of the interpersonal need for inclusion.

Positive terms: associate, interact, mingle, communicate, belong, companion, comrade, attend to, member, togetherness, join, extrovert.

Negative terms: exclusion, isolate, outsider, outcast, lonely, detached, withdrawn, abandoned, ignored.

Control Phase

<i>Focus:</i>	Influence (top or bottom)
<i>Interactions:</i>	Confrontation
<i>Basic feeling:</i>	Independence
<i>Questions:</i>	Am I competent enough? Who are the leaders? How much impact do they possess? How much influence will I have? Am I strong enough to stand up for my demands? Do others recognize and appreciate my competence?
<i>Behaviour:</i>	Try to gain or to avoid leadership Attack the leader or other members Discussions of orientation towards the task Form sub-groups Protect and soothe Choose the oldest or the least influential member as a leader Find a leader through majority resolution

What happens in the Control Phase?

A group moves forward to the Control Phase when the leader is to be selected or the competence and abilities of the members are compared. In this phase, one or more members try to control the group by for example giving directives.

MEMBERS

- Form sub-groups and show less consideration for the group as a team
- Openly show competition between sub-groups and members
- Prevaricate to explain questioned behaviours
- Try to convince the others of opinions being right or wrong
- Refuse to get influenced by others

- Increase the frequency and the intensity of the conflicts
- Try to gain or to avoid leadership through the help of others
- Try to solve problems through voting, compromising or getting external help
- Actively try to expose "hidden motives" of other members but are very careful not to expose themselves
- Give feedback, which often seems ill tempered and aggressive

- Seem to be indifferent to whether they are accepted in the group or not
- Take great risks and show that they are ready to take the consequences, even if it means exclusion

- Show needs for structure and leadership, but are unwilling to allow anybody to fulfil these needs
- Revolt against the formal leader
- Try to reduce the stress incurred through conflicts by escaping to irrelevant activities
- Discuss rules of procedure and methods of decision-making

Control behaviour is defined as behaviour directed toward the satisfaction of the interpersonal need for control.

Positive terms: power, authority, dominance, influence, control, ruler, superior officer, leader.

Negative terms: rebellion, resistance, follower, anarchy, submissive, henpecked.

Openness Phase

<i>Focus:</i>	Relations (close or far)
<i>Interactions:</i>	Embrace
<i>Basic feeling:</i>	Mutual dependence
<i>Questions:</i>	Am I being liked? Do I like the others? What level of closeness is allowed? Am I safe enough to show deep feelings? Are the members loyal? Do I get my share of caring?
<i>Behaviour:</i>	Feel trust in the group. Be able to express both positive and negative feelings. Reduce the personal area and increase the physical contact. Form sub-groups without interfering with the team Openly discuss most topics Accept silence without a feeling of discomfort

What happens in the Openness Phase?

To reach the level of openness, which characterise the Openness Phase, the group needs a far-sighted and competent leadership, both within the team and within the organisation.

MEMBERS START OFF BY

- Handling conflicts whenever they arise
- Discovering that teamwork often gives a better result than working individually
- Demanding consensus solutions
- Asking for suggestions - listen, evaluate, react on and carry them through if they find them convenient
- Showing satisfaction because they think that all conflicts are solved
- Openly discuss ideas, feelings, opinions and feedback
- Showing contentment of their role in the group and with the activities
- Demanding unanimity
- Feeling that "we are invulnerable!"

- Deprecating other groups - "they aren't as clever, competent... etc."
- Defending the identity of the group, both internal and external
- Making great demands on loyalty
- Sometimes getting more playful than interested in the task
- Focusing most of the energy on securing personal relations and avoiding returning to the Control Phase

MEMBERS CONTINUE BY

- Regarding conflicts as mutual problems giving possibilities to develop and grow
- Feeling secure, knowing that everybody is appreciated
- Showing affection and fellowship without demanding right of possession
- Not being threatened or jealous of sub-groups or pairs forming
- Allowing each member to decide himself when and how much he is willing to participate in group activities
- Showing great faith in each other and a wish to actively support
- Being able to deal with relationship problems without neglecting the task and the goal.
- Having an open, straightforward and honest communication
- Making decisions through discussions, which encourage incongruity
- Being aware that it is possible to continuously improve the processes in the group

Openness behaviour is defined as behaviour directed toward the satisfaction of the interpersonal need for affection.

Positive terms: love, like, emotionally close, positive feelings, personal, friendship, and sweetheart.

Negative terms: hate, dislike, cool and emotionally distant

What happens during the intermediate stages?

In between the three main phases, two intermediate phases occurs. Both are characterised by having no conflicts. The Comfort Phase and the Idyll Phase are sometimes hard to separate.

Comfort Phase

Prior to a group entering into the Control Phase, they will pass through the Comfort Phase. The group enters when the members have solved the last question of membership and when everyone definitely is accepted in the group. During Inclusion Phase, the members have deliberately avoided conflicts, especially those concerning leadership. They will now rest in the Comfort Phase to gather energy. As long as possible, they avoid discussing questions of authority and responsibilities.

MEMBERS

- Develop a feeling of "we are all together in the group!"
- Openly demonstrate their engagement in the team

Idyll Phase

The Idyll Phase, before entering into the Openness Phase, is normally preceded by an intensive conflict, usually related to leadership or other forces trying to withhold the group. Bringing this conflict out into the open often makes the members feel relieved. The feeling is hard to describe, but anyone having experienced it could never be mistaken about the Idyll Phase.

MEMBERS

- Develop a group identity and understand their roles in the team
- Expend lots of energy to preserve the feeling instead of solving the task

The energy of the group

To be able to solve the important issues in the development of a group, a large quantity of energy will be consumed. Depending on the maturity and the phase, the energy will be directed towards various subjects.

During Inclusion Phase, the energy is focused on questions concerning membership. It takes time to work out the preferred amount of inclusion interchange and just how much actual contact, interaction and communication each member wishes to have.

To move on to the Control Phase, the members have to be prepared to take risks that could result in exclusion. It is important to be willing to take chances for the group to be able to move on. During the Control Phase, the questions of leadership are most significant and relevant for the process of maturing. It is important to share responsibility, handle conflicts and cast the parts in the group. This is the phase that demands most effort and most time.

When the members have found their roles, the group can move forward into the Openness Phase. This is often experienced as a strong feeling of satisfaction and contentedness since all the conflicts are solved. The introduction of this phase is characterised by cautiousness and it is important to maintain the atmosphere and the feelings. The energy is focused on preserving the affection and openness. The role of the leader is important to avoid stagnation. During the continuation of the phase, efforts are concentrated on developing effective communication, confidence and acceptance of all members. In this phase the group does not need to solve questions of membership or conflicts, but can focus the energy on striving towards the goal. Problems in relationships are solved whenever they appear.

If the problems in each phase are not solved as they arise, then the cycle will go backwards and the group will return to the previous phase.