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# The Tyranny of a Team Ideology

Amanda Sinclair

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## Abstract

People at work have been tyrannized by a team ideology based on the use of work groups as a key to effective organizational performance. The hegemony of this ideology has created an obsession with teams in workplaces governed by oppressive stereotypes of what teams should be like and how they should behave. This paper examines four elements of the prevailing team ideology — the way work in groups is defined, links between individual motivation and organizational performance, views of leadership, and the effects of power, conflict and emotion in work groups. Some alternative perspectives on team behaviour elucidate the ways in which the prevailing paradigm ultimately hinders groups and tyrannizes the individual team member — by camouflaging coercion and conflict with the appearance of consultation and cohesion. Examination of the limits and effects of the ideology provide the basis for an alternative understanding of the strengths, constraints and complexities of group work.

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## Introduction

Teams in various forms have become ubiquitous ways of working. As task forces, committees, work groups and quality circles, they are used to provide leadership, accomplish research, maximize creativity and operationalize structural flexibility (Peters and Waterman 1982; Payne 1988).

The prescriptions of much contemporary management thinking are based on a dominant ideology of teamwork. While teams have been narrowly construed as a tool of the Organization Development Model, the ideology is much more pervasive. Teams are embraced as tools of diverse models of organizational reform from organization development (Dunphy 1976) to work restructuring (Poza and Markus 1980), from quality management to industrial democracy and from corporate culture and Japanese management approaches to complex contingency prescriptions. Beliefs about the benefits of teams occupy a central and unquestioned place in organizational reform. It is all the more surprising that, despite some differences in context, the team ideology has been espoused with such consistency.

The hegemony of this ideology has been supported by researchers who offer the 'team' as a tantalizingly simple solution to some of the intrac-

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able problems of organizational life. Teams appear to satisfy everything at once: individual needs (for sociability, self-actualization, participative management), organizational needs (for productivity, organizational development, effectiveness) and even society's needs for alleviating the malaise of alienation and other by-products of modern industrial society (Johnson and Johnson 1987).

However, do work groups deserve the status they have acquired as multi-purpose panaceas for organizational problems? As has been powerfully argued in organizational analysis (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Astley and Van de Ven 1983; Reed 1985; Alvesson 1987), the dominance of a particular paradigm has substantial costs in the institutionalization of mechanisms of control. The purpose of this article is to scrutinize the ideological basis of the prevailing team paradigm. Four sets of assumptions which underpin the ideology are identified:

- Narrowly conceived definitions of work groups and group work are based on the assumption that mature teams are task-oriented, and have successfully minimized corruption by other group impulses.
- It is an individual motivation formula and a 'unitary view' of organizations which assumes confluence, not conflict, between individual, group and organizational goals (Burrell and Morgan 1979: 204).
- Simplistic views of the superiority of participative leaders are held.

- The views are also held that power, conflict and emotion are subversive forces which divert groups from work.

Research from some alternative critical, psychoanalytic and other perspectives is used to suggest some areas in which the paradigm requires overhaul.

A premise of this paper is that teams can contribute to getting work of all kinds done, but not when their application is informed by a narrow framework that nurtures inappropriate expectations. Further, and more critically, the team ideology embraced by these assumptions tyrannizes because, under the banner of benefits to all, teams are frequently used to amouffage coercion under the pretence of maintaining cohesion; conceal conflict under the guise of consensus; convert conformity into a semblance of creativity; give unilateral decisions a co-determinist seal of approval; delay action in the supposed interests of consultation; legitimize lack of leadership; and disguise expedient arguments and personal agendas.

### Definitions of Teams and Group Work

Management theorists have defined a 'team' as a distinctive class of group, which is more task-oriented than other groups, and which has a set of obvious rules and rewards for its members (Adair 1986). According to this view, high-performing teams substitute collective goals and an inter-

est in the task at hand for individual agendas and inter-personal conflicts.

Group theorists have noted the parallels between therapeutic groups and other types of work groups (Foulkes 1964: 110). However, the emphasis of team ideology on the task-orientation of teams has tended to idealize and resist recognizing that groups with a task still experience anti-task behaviour, and indeed have much in common with other types of groups.

Seeking to understand both individual and group work, researchers have, on the whole, been dogged by the search for discrete or measurable outputs of work. Work has many forms. Some definitions of individual work contrast 'performance' and 'effectiveness' in administrative and managerial contexts (Likert 1967; Sorenson 1971) with creativity and innovation in research or scientific contexts (Gordon 1961; Schön 1963), yet such experimental measures often seem to bear little resemblance to individual experiences of work (Terkel 1974).

Efforts to define group work by researchers in the team ideology tradition have produced a range of measures referring either to the output or to the quality of group process. In the former category are group work as productivity and drive (Stogdill 1972), decision-making (Klein 1961) and problem-solving (Vroom 1969). In the latter category are group work as compatibility (Schutz 1955), cohesiveness (Argyle 1969) and effectiveness — a combined measure of task interdependence, outcome interdependence and potency (Shea and Guzzo 1987). Work is assumed to have occurred if there is output (products assembled, agenda items canvassed, responsibilities allocated) and the process is variably operationalized by measures such as cohesiveness (Mudrack 1989).

However, none of these measures provide a simple means of diagnosing when and what work occurs in groups or what group work looks like when it does occur. For example, what kind of exchange is a working one and does all decision-making constitute evidence of group work? Further, groups, even more often than individuals, are appointed to ill-defined and even unachievable tasks such as ensuring communication or coordinating activities (Kanter 1983). How are these tasks to be evaluated and monitored? When has sufficient communication occurred to qualify as task accomplishment? In many work groups there is considerable scope for the group to define its own task, and there is evidence that definitions are never permanently resolved — while it suits one individual to view the task as completed, another will see it differently.

A number of researchers have endeavoured to refine our understanding of what work takes place when, from the suggestion that 'the talk' itself is work (Weick 1979; Gronn 1983), to the argument that the presence of work is signalled by identifiable items of behavioural interaction (Klein 1961; Bales 1970; Jacques 1970).

Despite this encouraging agreement that work in groups can take various forms, team theorists almost inexorably end up looking for decision-making as the predominant group work indicator. Yet historians, public

olicy analysts and clinicians, amongst others, provide evidence that decision-making is a poor indicator of work and our focus should be the process by which the decision is reached rather than simply the decision itself (Bion 1961; Allison 1971; Janis 1972; Tuchman 1984; Turk 1988). Thus, meetings which rate high on number of decisions are often characterized by low participation rates, a dictatorial leadership style and a rejected and withdrawn group mood. In contrast, meetings which may be evaluated by members as 'hard working' can be full of flight reactions — extended and collaborative exchanges, where a metaphor or fantasy captures the group's imagination. This suggests that a complex and perhaps team-specific definition of group work is required, with varied blends of decision-making and fantasy.

It has often been assumed as part of the team ideology that work and fantasy are exclusive, as if groups and organizations are only capable of a mixed sum of emotional impetus which either gets vested in the task, or is swept away by fantasy (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984b). Accompanying this assumption is the view that groups need ways to resist fantasy (Janis 1972). On the contrary, observations suggest that for some groups, fantasy and accompanying emotions positively assist work and the creative process. Indeed, if we take one definition of fantasy we can see components which could also be interpreted as evidence of creative group work: elements are selected for extended discussion; actions are taken advantage of for the creation of symbolic meaning; the selected elements and chance combinations are elaborated; the elaboration is performed cooperatively as an inter-personal process; and the group process has the qualities of a 'chain reaction' — a process which reinforces itself increasingly in an accelerated curve of interest, excitement and involvement (Bales 1970).

By their emphasis on the measurable performance outcomes of teams such as decision-making, researchers have constructed standards for teams which tell only half the story, and perhaps tell the wrong half. Because work groups have such diverse tasks, environments and conditions, teams require context-specific definitions of group work (Payne 1988). For example, reporting on agenda items may signify work in one context and an escape from work in another. Flight reactions may indicate work for one group and escape for another. The work of any group is likely to be a unique and changing blend of decision-making, exchange of information, conflict, fantasy, participativeness and other group behaviours.

### The Confluence of Individual, Group and Organizational Interests

Organization Development (OD) is constructed on the assumptions that work groups have positive consequences for the worker's self-development, for individual satisfaction and performance in the workplace, and consequently for organizational productivity (Gulowen 1972). While the

OD model has been qualified and superseded in many contexts, these assumptions have persisted in more recent models of organizational effectiveness.

The first component of this formula is individual motivation. Our suspicions might be aroused by the turnover in the make-up of work motivations which teams so obligingly satisfy. With the earliest Human Relations theorists, workers' needs were for sociability (Mayo 1945; Lewin 1947). Then, following Maslow's postulation of a hierarchy of needs, attention focused on responsibility and autonomy, the opportunity to self-direct, self-reward and self-actualize (Herzberg et al. 1959; MacGregor 1960). Later, work motivation was closely tied to workers' needs for participative or democratic leadership style supported by a flat organizational structure (Likert 1976).

Work groups are a structural solution which suits all these views of work motivation. Yet their turnover underlines the inconclusiveness of efforts to test them. Carey (1981), for example, cites the findings of studies which have been ignored because they found no obvious change in workers' behaviour as a result of 'democratic consultation'. Despite this absence of evidence and other cross-cultural research which contradicts such assumptions about motivation, the basic tenets of this model have been very hard to shift (Faucheux et al. 1982). In the wider psychological debate little support has been found for Maslow's hypothesis (Hofstede 1980; Sievers 1986; Landy and Becker 1987). However, it has provided a convenient and, at the time, eminently defensible justification for a whole range of Organization Development techniques, including teams, in which both researchers and management had a strongly vested interest (Baritz 1960; Anthony 1977; Thompson 1983; Alvesson 1987). Despite the evidence that people are not so simply motivated by the sociability and self-actualization supposedly offered in work groups, much of management theory still prescribes teams as if they are a haven for the alienated employee. Behaviour which does not conform to the ideology is dismissed as idiosyncratic aberration by organization theorists:

'The quality of interpersonal relationships among group members often leaves much to be desired. People fall too readily into patterns of competitiveness, conflict and hostility, only rarely do group members support and help one another as difficult ideas and issues are worked through' (Nadler, Hackman and Lawler 1979).

The authors of this masterly understatement cite the research findings that groups containing people trained in inter-personal skills do not show improved task effectiveness, often alarmingly the reverse.

Does work in groups generate heightened job satisfaction? The popular wisdom of management theory is that every individual can find, or be helped to find, a 'role' in groups (Benne and Sheats 1948). This article suggests the opposite, that individuals experience substantial and continuing internal tensions as group members, and that participation in

anticipated benefits. The cult of the 'team player' in corporate cultures is more likely to produce frustration and stress in those outside the power élite, such as the middle and lower-level employee, whose experience bears no resemblance to the mythology (Zaleznik 1989: 268). The 'group-ism' which was lauded as the basis of Japanese management's success has been revealed by Clegg et al. as 'ideological wish-fulfilment' (1989).

Yet, hardly surprising, the implications for teams of more critical research about organizational life have not been considered by the team builders. Alternative perspectives suggest an altogether different understanding of the relationships between individuals, work groups and organizations. Instead of believing that individual power needs can be accommodated within groups, which are then liberated to deal with the task, an alternative view regards all group activity as the consuming and irresolvable struggle for power. Instead of expecting a group's impetus to be towards work, behaviour is seen as being fundamentally political. In the place of the worker as a natural group member is an individual possessed with idiosyncratic and uncompromising needs, for whom group life is only attractive if it promises power, not subordination. Teams do not necessarily provide fulfilment of individual needs, nor do they necessarily contribute to individual satisfaction and performance or organizational effectiveness. On the contrary, it is likely that the infatuation with teams and the consequent requirement for individuals to work in meetings means that, quite simply, organizations are not getting the best performance from many of their members.

### Requirements of Group Leaders

One of the virtues of work groups lauded by organizational theorists is their capacity for self-management (Manz and Sims 1987). In a somewhat excessive reaction against the traditional autocratic styles of leadership in organizations, democratic and participative style management through work groups was uncritically embraced as the way to motivate workers (Zaleznik 1977). It is argued that, in the flat organization, decision-making is delegated to groups, and workers are able to assume responsibility, take initiatives and participate in decision-making, rather than look to others to do so. It is further argued that because workers have participated in these processes, they will be more committed to, and keen to implement, group decisions. The ideal leadership style of 'Delegation' suits mature teams and liberates leaders, so we are to believe, from having to worry at all about 'task' or 'relationship' behaviour (Hersey, Blanchard and Hambleton 1980).

In oversimplifying the requirement for leadership as one of learning a more participative style, the team ideology has ensured that many work groups have suffered from being encouraged to dispense with, or ignore, leadership concerns. Psychoanalytic and socioanalytic research has

groups is usually stressful and only occasionally, for some, satisfying.

There is evidence from several quite different perspectives that being in teams is stressful. Because group work involves ambiguous performance standards, often based on the judgements of peers, additional sources of uncertainty and tension are introduced. Work groups evoke emotions for individuals in situations where 'feeling rules' are more negotiable with a consequent increase in 'emotional labour' (Van Maanen and Kunda 1989: 56). Psychoanalytic research indicates that in becoming organizational group members, individuals 'often lose their problem-solving facilities, become emotionally segregated and blame others for their failure' (Wells 1980: 170). Evidence from industrial democracy programmes reveals that participation in work groups can often be a source of stress rather than satisfaction (Rothschild-Whitt 1986). Indeed, certain types of workers and certain types of work seem better suited to solitary work environments, and individuals with particular work styles will never perform well in the team (Handy 1978; Belbin 1981).

Even for those who thrive on the group experience and perhaps enjoy their job more, is there necessarily any improvement in task performance? A strong link between satisfaction and performance in the workplace has not been finally established (Perrow 1986). If we challenge Herzberg's starting point that individuals basically want to work, can it not be that group members use their groups to escape work? Observations of work groups reveal behaviour which is anti-task, designed to avoid work and, in some cases, this behaviour predominates. Finally, does improved individual performance necessarily lead to organizational effectiveness? The prevailing paradigm of organizational theory — that of structural functionalism — asserts that the basic movement of both groups and organizations is towards an operating equilibrium, upheld by a consensus between members which serves both organizational and individual interests (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Keeley 1983; Smircich 1983; Morgan 1986). Conflict in the group is seen as a repeatable aberration rather than an endemic affliction. The paradigm assumes that individual goals can be catered for by organizational goals.

In the more recent corporate culture recipes for excellent, integrative and lannish organizations, teams are a basic building block (Ouchi 1981; Peters and Waterman 1982; Kanter 1983). According to the theorists, there is a direct link between the team's capacity to provide a sense of meaning, an empowering or 'power tool', a route to creativity, flexibility and 'cheap learning', and effective organizational performance (Peters and Waterman 1982). Assumptions of the confluence of individual and organizational interests and the consequent benefits of teams are evident in other recipes for organizational reform. The quality circles and 'ring' system of decision-making are well-known, though misunderstood, features of Japanese management.

There is increasing evidence that teamwork does not always produce the

demonstrated the centrality of leadership to group behaviour (Rice 1965). Both the group as a whole and the individual members are dependent on leadership being exercised. Group process theorists are unanimous that all groups will experience phases of identifying with, rejecting and working through relations with authority (Bennis and Shepard 1956; Mills 1964; Slater 1966). This process cannot be eliminated simply by eliminating leaders from groups. Kets de Vries and Miller (1984a) argue that the main determinant of a group's capacity to manage its work and fantasy life is the insight, judgement and self-knowledge of the leader. Other recent research confirms that the most critical ingredients of team success is its leadership, and refusal to recognize its importance is a sure recipe for producing a group obsessed by authority relations. The abdication of leadership can, in effect, paralyze groups.

Just what is effective team leadership? Reviews and findings have substantially qualified the conditions under which participative leadership is desirable and effective (Locke and Schweiger 1979). It is now recognized that teams are not substitutes for strong, visionary leadership by one individual (Bower and Weinberg 1988). Weick (1978) has proposed the term 'medium' as a metaphor for leader, to help one understand the effect and effectiveness of leaders in groups. The leader's prime function in a group is to filter and enact environmental complexity in a way which the group finds comprehensible. Denhardt has explored the unconscious dynamic of leadership suggesting that 'every act of leadership is oriented towards some alteration in the "consciousness" of the group ... The leader expresses not what the group is but what it might be ... one version of the group's potential' (Denhardt 1981: 130). Inevitably, any subsequent leader actions provide the seeds of his or her demise, but such leadership initiatives are essential to group creativity. Accompanying renewed attention to leadership should be a new perception about how the leader should operate within the team which goes beyond the narrow managerial perspective of the team ideology (Fisher 1986; Kets de Vries 1988).

### Power, Conflict and Emotions as Subversive Forces in Work Groups

Organization theory recipes for good groups and winning teams rate groups on the 'quality of decision-making', 'communications', 'cohesion', 'clarity and acceptance of goals', 'acceptance of minority views' and other criteria (Schein 1969). Such recipes betray a simplistic expectation of group 'maturity' and 'effectiveness', down-playing the endemic forces of power, conflict and emotion in groups. How, for example, is 'acceptance of minority views' to be indicated?

Within groups, power has been treated as a regrettable and regressive tendency exercised by individuals who fail to identify with the collective

task. While even the most fervent team proponents recognize that political pressures exist in groups, the response of the ideology is to minimize the impact of power, through training and containing or banishing power-seekers or by creating an organizational environment in which a spirit of egalitarianism renders power and conflict irrelevant. An alternative view is that power-seeking to advance individual ends is endemic in groups. This view recognizes that neither training nor organizational actions will alter the intrinsically political nature of teams. Further, it recognizes that the team ideology's distaste for power has diverted attention from the way power works in groups, in interaction with task and other behaviours, towards constructive as well as destructive ends. According to this view, individuals use a variety of political tactics in teams, some of which don't look like the conventional exercise of power (Kets de Vries 1980). For example, Fiorelli finds that power within clinical and health treatment groups 'was not equally distributed since an overwhelming majority of treatment decisions was influenced by one discipline' (i.e. medicine) and concludes that 'autocratic decision-making was ... more prevalent than consensual decision-making' (1988: 9).

Similarly, Janis records a high incidence of error in group decision-making arising from political factors such as a group 'composed of hostile factions engaged in internecine warfare' and the 'familiar' scenario 'when a powerful autocratic leader induces conformity to his or her idiosyncratic position, stifling all dissent, scepticism and cautionary information from the members ... out of fear of recrimination' (Janis 1985: 165-169).

Rather than viewing the urges to exercise power as a threat to teams, group behaviour could be analyzed as conflict between individuals seeking to exercise power in different ways. 'Task-oriented' behaviour could be recast as a particular type of power-seeking by some individuals, and desirable outcomes of groups (in 'decisions', 'productivity', 'creativity') could be comprehended as the successful assertion of some individuals' power-seeking efforts over others.

The view that 'consensus is vital' is also prevalent among management theorists advising on the operation of teams. 'Insist on consensus' Hardaker and Ward (1987) exhort, paying no attention to the implications of such an imposed 'consensus' or to what conflicts and power discrepancies are superficially concealed. Unanimous decisions and easily won 'consensus' inevitably betray a condition of group powerlessness rather than effectiveness.

Since Janis (1972) recognized the phenomena of 'groupthink', team builders have acknowledged that groups generate pressures to conform, and that they can impede rather than encourage 'the healthy exchange of views'. Instead of an effort to understand the basis of conflict and conformity in groups, this important insight has prompted a flurry of predictable recipes for creativity which include generating commitment, developing roles and morale.

According to this recipe, the creative process boils down to the team

simply looking 'beyond' what it's doing now to new possibilities (Hare 1982; Hardaker and Ward 1987).

Despite the conflict-laden experience most people encounter in groups, relatively little attention has been given to the phenomenon of intra-group conflict (Smith and Berg 1988). Only now are we beginning to come to grips with the inevitability of conflict, the nature of conflict as basic incompatibility rather than just surface disagreement (Putman 1986), and the limits on our skills and scope to manage conflict in groups.

The structural-functional or functionalist paradigm has upheld consensus and individual rationality as the basis on which groups should operate. Since the backlash against T-groups and Sensitivity Training as tools of organizational development, theorists have attempted to separate emotion-laden encounter or 'growth groups' from task-oriented teams. Like power, emotion has been regarded as a disruptive, rather than productive force in work groups, and its expression has been discouraged.

In contrast, Bion (1961) argues that emotion is a mobilizing force of all groups and for all individuals, and group life creates conflict between the need for belonging and a sense of frustration at having to conform. A central dilemma for the individual in the work group rests in his or her ability to maintain individuality while achieving the satisfaction of belonging to the group. It is a dilemma devoid of permanent resolution, condemning the group member to ongoing management of the 'anxiety provoked by perceived annihilation in membership on the one hand and separation and loss of affiliation on the other' (Diamond and Allcorn 1987: 526).

Despite varying opinions on the interrelatedness of conflict, emotion and a group's capacity to work, there is agreement that a group's confrontation and comprehension of conflict and its emotional responses to it, liberates or 'releases' the group (Diamond and Allcorn 1987; Schneider and Shrivastava 1988; Smith and Berg 1988). Releases the group to what? Does greater effectiveness, adaptiveness or work, however defined, necessarily follow? Or is the network of interdependencies that generate conflicting emotion simply temporarily reorganized — perhaps generating an appearance of work? Groups expressing emotion have typically been treated by management theorists as escaping work. My observations suggest, to the contrary, that the expression of some group emotion may be an essential ingredient in the work formula of some groups.

Intra-personal and inter-personal conflict are endemic and inevitable in work group life. Conflict and work, for some groups, go hand in hand. Simply focusing on the eventual 'consensus', 'decisions' or outcomes of groups only acknowledges the final prevailing distribution of power, rather than the way the group progresses through alternative distributions. Alternatively, groups could be encouraged to recognize conflict as 'an index of vitality' (Smith and Berg 1987: 648).

An analysis of who holds power in groups provides a yardstick to predict how behaviour is likely to be perceived in a group — as work or as non-

work. Behaviour which recognizes and defers to the dominant power-holders in the group is likely to be labelled constructive or task-oriented, while behaviour which challenges that power is labelled disruptive and counter-productive. It follows that groups with a clear and accepted distribution of power are most likely to be judged productive because decisions have arisen (albeit unilaterally) and actions arise. That a team has a reputation for decision-making and hence for productivity might say much more about the mechanisms of power and control in the group than the level of information exchanged, quality of interaction, level of creativity or other indices of group behaviour. An alternative view might require that group work cannot occur without a basic redistribution of power.

### Conclusion

There are signs that the team ideology might be in decline. Some organization theorists and some organization members seem relieved to admit the difficulties of getting groups to work. While Drucker (1988) forecasts that the 'New Organization' will be flatter, with 'decentralized and autonomous units' and extensive use of 'task forces', he recognizes that these structures create problems — how, for instance, are they to be led? How are the ambitions of professional specialists to be reconciled with those of managers? Other management commentators advocate a return to one-to-one leadership with leaders making clear individual decisions without recourse to management teams and to more individualistic organizational cultures (Handy 1978; Bennis and Nanus 1985).

A vast amount of research and theory-building about teamwork has been undertaken. Yet the rich and complex understanding emerging from many disciplinary fronts is not reflected in the team ideology which prevails among managerially oriented consultants and experts, proselytizing trainers and educators. To witness an infatuation that 'the group is good' is disturbing when it is the rationale for organizational upheaval, but even more so when there is little acknowledgement of the inequities, costs and risks that often accompany team structures.

The hegemony of the ideology has created a tyranny of oppressive stereotypes fed by a team-building industry. The framework of organization theory, in which teams have been located, has underplayed some of the vital ingredients of groups, while the mutually beneficial characteristics of groups have been widely overstated. The advocates of the team ideology have avoided the analysis of power and conflict by the imposition of an artificial consensus.

How should we determine whether or when teams have a place in organizations? A popular way to anticipate whether or not a team-based organizational structure will be appropriate is to adopt a contingency approach. Contingency models match the appropriate structure to the context — the technology, the environment and level of turbulence, the

managerial style and degree of differentiation within the organization. Clearly, creative or capable teams are a fragile phenomena in which a combination of circumstances culminate in an experience that is as rewarding as it is effective.

The argument here does not dispute that teams can be satisfying, productive and creative contexts. What is suggested is that whether they are, will not be a product of cultural, organizational or environmental characteristics. Rather, the effectiveness of teams depends on the extent to which their application is informed by ideology, on the one hand, or careful and critical appraisal, on the other. The extent to which the team ideology is unquestioningly embraced will determine how fruitful is the experience of participation with groups. It is the ideology, rather than the team itself, which tyrannizes, because it encourages teams to be used for inappropriate tasks and to fulfill unrealistic objectives. By developing a more critical appreciation of the costs and limitations of teams, they will be put to better use.

This article identifies some assumptions about teams which have become so entrenched as to disguise their ideological basis. Some valuable alternative research, largely neglected by the mainstream team ideology, is recollected to restore recognition of the complex ways in which teams work and the ways in which their use can be ill-informed. By documenting the case for those who choose to work alone, by encouraging a greater awareness of the inevitable ambivalence of individuals in groups and an understanding of the flow and force of group emotions, conflict and requirements for leadership, individuals and groups are more likely to operate in a more individually satisfying and work-directed way. These and other alternative ways of thinking about the dynamics of work groups should alleviate the tyrannical tendencies created by the ideology.

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