
This article focuses on the theory surrounding the dynamics of teamworking, exploring what helps teams to be more flexible and dynamic, and what stands in the way of this. It argues that dynamic team working is becoming more important as a result of ever-changing ways of working, new technology, and evolving needs of organisations.

In order to answer the following questions, it would also help to read chapter 6 of the text book.

1. a) How do different scholars define the term ‘team’?
b) What are the common themes of these definitions?
c) What are some of the problems with these definitions?

- Dibble and Gibson outline a range of definitions of team (pp.925-926)
- The textbook also offers a definition of team (p.175)
- Early definitions of the term ‘team’ focus on clearly defined boundaries, but more recently scholars have begun to focus away from this, recognizing that teams operate in different ways depending on the needs of the task to be completed.

2. a) What do Dibble and Gibson highlight as the reasons teams might need to move in and out of team boundaries?
b) Can you think of other examples?

In the article Dibble and Gibson give a number of examples of where team members might need to move in and out of team boundaries (p.926)

- Medicine – different medical professionals working together on different shifts.
- Contract workers – entering a team at a specific point in order to perform particular tasks.
- Those working in start-ups – often this begins with a small team and rapidly expands.

It would be useful here for students to apply their own knowledge to think of other examples of dynamic teams, either from their own experience, or more broadly.

3. a) What are team boundaries?
b) What are some of the commonalities between these definitions?
c) Are there problems with these definitions?
d) How do we address these problems?

- Dibble and Gibson point to a number of different definitions of team boundaries (p.298).
- Theorists cited by Dibble and Gibson argue that it is important for teams to have permeable boundaries, but there needs to be a balance of permeability depending on the needs of the team and the task to be completed (p.929).
There are multiple types of boundaries identified in the literature so far and therefore it is important to address the type of boundary (social, cultural, physical, etc) in order to address the specific challenges they present.

4. a) Why is it important that the focus here is on the ‘ease with which workers can cross team boundaries’ (p.930)?

b) What sort of research methods could be employed to address questions like this?

- This quote highlights a need for a focus on the experiences of workers. While Dibble and Gibson present a theoretical basis for further work on the permeability of teams they also propose further work in this area. Addressing how workers experience team boundaries and the ease or difficulty with which they can cross these is a so far unexplored area of research.
- Depending on students’ familiarity with research methods they may need support to answer, and this may be their first steps at addressing the connection between theory and practice/empirical research. It may be a good starting point to discuss empirical methods such as surveys, interviews or observation and to begin to get them to think about how theory connects to workplace and employees.

5. a) What are the four ‘antecedents’ (things that come before) Dibble and Gibson identify to boundary permeability? (p931)

b) What are the components of each of these factors?

- Team boundedness – is the ‘extent to which members are involved in a team’. They outline three ways in which this can be measured (p.931), arguing that the way individual members connect to the team will have an impact on the permeability of the team.
- Membership model diversity – is the extent to which individuals feel that they and others belong to the team.
- Team member receptivity – is the way(s) in which teams are receptive to new members.
- Inter-team integration – is the way(s) in which teams interact to work with other teams.

6. What are the outcomes of boundary permeability that they identify? (p.935)

- Dibble and Gibson point to the ways in which previous research has focused on the negative effects of boundary permeability, but go on to discuss the ways in which this can have a positive effect on team performance and/or be a necessary way for a team to develop due to the nature of the workplace. They identify increased innovation, team membership change, and shared leadership as some of the positive effects of boundary permeability.
7. What are the moderators of the relationship between boundary permeability and outcomes? (p.938)
   - Dibble and Gibson outline a number of different moderators which factor into the relationship between boundary permeability and outcomes. Among these are the types of task the team needs to complete; the extent to which team members need to interact and cooperate with each other in order to complete these tasks; the knowledge management systems used to best utilize the skills and expertise of the team; and the ways in which the team share leadership.

8. Why do Dibble and Gibson argue that boundary permeability is an important focus? What do you think?

Dibble and Gibson state that previous research has focused too heavily on the detrimental effects of boundary permeability in teams. They argue that as ways of working and new technologies evolve, it is also necessary for teams and team working to evolve. In some organizations or parts of organizations it is critically important for team members to be able to cross team boundaries in order to share expertise, address challenges, and continue to innovate.