Small Group Research

Teams in Organizations : Prevalence, Characteristics, and Effectiveness
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TEAMS IN ORGANIZATIONS
Prevalence, Characteristics, and Effectiveness

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This article offers a typology of team types found in organizations and reports the results of two surveys sent to U.S. organizations asking about the prevalence, duties, composition, and structure of groups and teams in practice. One sample was randomly selected from the entire population of U.S. organizations; the second sample consisted of organizations known or believed to use teams. Nearly half (48%) of the respondents in the random sample indicated that their organization used some type of team, and ongoing project teams were reported most frequently. Teams were more prevalent in organizations with multiple departments, multiple divisions, higher sales, and more employees. Interpersonal conflict was the best predictor of perceived team effectiveness, but several structural and composition characteristics of the team were related to conflict and/or effectiveness as well. Organizations that reported using teams generally did not support them in terms of team-level performance feedback or compensation practices.

Groups and teams are ubiquitous in organizations—at least that is the impression one gets from reading the introduction to almost any article on the topic published in the last decade. Studies pertaining to work groups or teams typically begin by noting how widespread teams are and citing others who have arrived at the same conclusions, but there is little data to support this assertion. The

increase in published research on task-oriented groups and teams is real enough (Bettenhausen, 1991; Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Guzzo & Dickson, 1996; Guzzo & Shea, 1992; Ilgen, 1999; Levine & Moreland, 1990; Sundstrom, DeMeuse & Futrell, 1990), but it would be fallacious to assume that greater visibility coincides with a general increase in the use of teams. If teams are indeed a crucial mechanism in today's competitive organization, it would be beneficial for researchers and practitioners to know more about how common they are, what they are like, and what they are asked to do. The primary goal of this article is to fill a gap in the literature by providing descriptive data on teams in U.S. organizations; a second goal is to examine correlates of team effectiveness using field data from real teams. Ultimately, such data will lay the foundation for a better understanding of how teams operate, the factors that determine their effectiveness, and the variables and relationships that should be focal in research efforts, given our limited scientific resources.

PAST RESEARCH

A search for empirical data on teams in organizational settings revealed little with regard to the prevalence, functions, and characteristics of work groups in organizations. What information is available comes from two longitudinal surveys dealing with trends in organizational settings.

As part of an ongoing national survey by the Center for Effective Organizations that examined the practices of Fortune 1000 companies, Lawler, Mohrman, and Ledford (1995) reported frequency data on the use of self-managed work teams and problem-solving groups three times over a 6-year interval (i.e., 1987, 1990, and 1993). In general, the use of both types of teams in the Fortune 1000 rose steadily during the period in question. Specifically, the use of problem-solving groups increased from 74% in 1987 to 84% in 1990, and 91% in 1993. In a similar fashion, the use of self-managed work teams rose from 27% in 1987, to 47% in 1990, and then to 68% in 1993. On the other hand, the response rate to the survey declined

from 51% (*n* = 476) in 1987, to 32% (*n* = 313) in 1990, to 28% (*n* = 279) in 1993.

The second source of data is a series of "Industry Reports" published in *Training* magazine (Gordon, 1992; "Industry Report," 1995). As part of a survey concerning trends in the workplace, a large sample of organizations with more than 100 employees was culled from *Dun & Bradstreet's Directory of U.S. Businesses* and *Training* subscription lists (12,000 in 1992, 13,000 in 1995). In 1992, 82% of organizations with 100 or more employees reported using some kind of team, with 45% reporting the use of permanent work teams, 35% reporting the use of one or more self-managed teams, 30% reporting the use of temporary project teams, and 18% using permanent, cross-functional teams. In those organizations that used teams, on average, 53% of employees were reported to be involved in some kind of team, and 32% were said to be in a self-managed team. In 1995, the number of organizations that reported using teams in general declined slightly to 78%, as did the number reporting the use of one or more self-managed teams (31%). On the other hand, a substantial number of respondents (40%) said their organizations were transitioning to a team-based structure, suggesting that teams are becoming more central to the production process in many organizations. Strengthening the generalizability of these findings, team usage varied little as a function of the number of organizational employees in either administration. Unfortunately, as with the Center for Effective Organizations study, the response rate for both surveys was relatively low (i.e., 13% in 1992 and 14% in 1995).

When the results of these two studies are combined, it seems clear that the use of teams in top-tier organizations is extensive. However, although these two studies provide some useful data, their contribution is limited in several ways. First, as noted above, they focused on a select group of organizations that is large and profitable and did not attempt to gather data on the "typical" U.S. organization. Second, focal terms (i.e., *work group* and/or *team*) were not explicitly defined in either study, undoubtedly necessitating respondent judgment calls in some situations and likely introducing some degree of measurement error in the process. Third,

these studies have gathered little or no information on the characteristics of the teams themselves, focusing on overall prevalence and/or investment at the organizational level as opposed to the structure, composition, or duties of specific teams. Finally, neither previous study systematically acquired information on the types of teams found in organizational settings.

PRESENT STUDY

This study addresses the limitations of previous research by (a) collecting data from a random sample of organizations, (b) using an explicit definition of the term team, (c) gathering data on team structure, composition, and task assignments, and (d) using an explicit classification scheme for team type. For the purposes of this study, a team was defined broadly as "a collection of three or more individuals who interact intensively to provide an organizational product, plan, decision, or service."

With regard to an explicit classification scheme, there has been increasing recognition in the past 30 years that work groups and teams cannot be understood independent of their context, and knowledge pertaining to teams in one setting does not necessarily generalize to teams in other settings (Guzzo & Shea, 1992; Hackman, 1990; McGrath, 1984, 1991; Steiner, 1972). Recent reviews of the empirical literature on teams in organizational settings have begun to acknowledge the importance of team type in organizing and discussing their findings (e.g., Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Guzzo & Dickson, 1996). A number of reviews focused on particular team types have also emerged in the organizational science literature, including top management teams (e.g., Hambrick, 1994); autonomous work groups and quality circles (Cordery, 1996); and semiautonomous work groups, quality circles, and research & development project teams (Cannon-Bowers, Oser, & Flanagan, 1992). There have also been calls for models of team performance geared to particular team types (e.g., Goodman, Ravlin, & Schminke, 1987). The message here is clear: Factors impacting team effectiveness are contingent on the team's context.

Despite the increased use of teams in organizational settings, no widely accepted typology exists to categorize teams although a number have been proposed. Some efforts have focused on classifying groups or teams based on key dimensions inherent in the task (i.e., Hackman, 1968; Laughlin, 1980; McGrath, 1984; Shaw, 1973; Steiner, 1972). Organizational researchers have, as an alternative, concentrated on identifying clusters of related teams found in actual organizations and applying appropriate labels (e.g., Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Hackman, 1990; Sundstrom, 1999; Sundstrom et al., 1990).

The dimensional approach is rational, deductive, and reductionistic; it starts with a set of a priori dimensions presumed to capture important contextual factors that vary across work groups. Theoretical types are then defined by all possible combinations of the various dimensions. Conversely, the clustering approach is empirical, inductive, and holistic; it involves sorting real-life work groups into categories based on perceived similarity. There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches. The dimensional approach is more theoretical, more comprehensive, and more explicit about how types differ; the holistic approach is simpler and more intuitive, and it tends to yield fewer team types. The primary disadvantage of the dimensional approach is the potentially large number of team types stemming from the many contextual factors that could be included in the classification scheme—it is difficult if not impossible to identify a "magic number" of necessary dimensions that would be agreeable to all. Rather, a trade-off exists where each extra dimension adds descriptive precision at an exponential cost in parsimony. On the other hand, efforts to sort real teams into distinguishable clusters may overlook less common types or those yet to be employed in organizational settings and thus be akin to searching for lost keys where the light is best. Furthermore, the clustering approach is subject to the biases, prejudices, and limited observations of its creator, and it is difficult to know when to stop breaking down clusters into finer categories. Overall, neither approach is clearly superior; each has its own strengths and weaknesses.

We opted to use the dimensional approach and a small set of factors that would be distinguishable to respondents and clearly important, given past theory and research. Two characteristics that emerge from efforts to classify teams in the literature are product type (Hackman, 1968; McGrath, 1984; Steiner, 1972) and temporal duration (McGrath, 1991; McGrath & O'Connor, 1996; Morgan, Glickman, Woodard, Blaiwes, & Salas, 1986). With regard to product type, an important distinction can be made between project tasks that revolve around processing information (i.e., planning, creating, choosing, deciding) and production tasks that involve some degree of hands-on physical activity. Several factors related to team effectiveness seem likely to differ as a function of this dimension. In particular, physical and psychomotor abilities will be more important for teams that engage in production tasks, and so will the coordination of member efforts, given the need for sequenced and synchronized activity. With regard to temporal duration, it may be important to distinguish short-term, ad hoc teams formed for one task cycle as opposed to long-term, ongoing teams that may continually be assigned new tasks or perform the same task in a cyclical fashion. Several phenomena may be more important to long-term, ongoing teams as opposed to ad hoc, short-term teams, including member satisfaction and motivation, attitude and value similarity, socialization, cohesion, norms, and conflict resolution. Based on the literature, we felt product type and temporal duration have the capacity to alter input-process-outcome relationships for organizational teams, and so we used these two characteristics to differentiate team types in the current study.

When crossed, the two dimensions yield a simple yet comprehensive taxonomy of organizational teams consisting of four types: (a) ad hoc project teams, (b) ongoing project teams, (c) ad hoc production teams, and (d) ongoing production teams. Ad hoc project teams exist for a finite period of time to solve problems, make plans or decisions, or interact with clients or customers. Ongoing project teams are standing teams with relatively stable membership that solve problems, make plans or decisions, or interact with clients or

customers. Ad hoc production teams are temporary in nature and formed on a case-by-case basis to build, construct, or assemble products; perform artistically or competitively; or provide a public service. Ongoing production teams are standing teams that perform the same tasks as ad hoc production teams on a regular or recurrent basis. These four types served as the framework for the construction of a survey asking about the frequency, duties, and effectiveness of teams in organizations.

Overall, the lack of an agreed-on typology of teams has limited the generalizability of previous research on the usage of teams. The studies that have discussed the use of teams have not attempted to use a typology of either sort but instead have focused on work groups in general, as if one model applied to them all. As difficult as it may ultimately prove to be to identify multiple models of team effectiveness, to the extent that they exist and have important substantive differences, it will be important to recognize such distinctions when conducting and interpreting empirical research.

Although the primary goal of this study was to provide descriptive data on the use of teams in organizations, we did generate a set of expectations to serve as a framework for examining the data. In general, we anticipated that the overall frequency of teams and the four types in particular would differ as a function of organizational characteristics such as size, age, structure, economic sector, and sales revenue. In particular, we expected that organizations would be more likely to use teams to the extent that they employed a large number of employees, were founded more recently, and contained multiple departments in their formal structure. Larger organizations have more resources with which to staff teams, multiple departments involve coordination requirements that can be met through the use of various kinds of teams, and organizations founded in the past 40 years would have been formed during a time period when the use of work groups was receiving more attention (Gordon, 1992; Lawler et al., 1995).

With regard to the frequency of the various team types, we expected that short-term types and project types would be reported most often. Being embedded in the organization's structure, long-

term teams require ongoing maintenance costs in the form of planning, coordination, selection, training, and materials and thus require a more extensive resource commitment than short-term teams. Project teams have more flexibility than production teams in that they tend to have fewer technical, mechanical, and workspace dependencies; they are less tightly coupled to the organization and can address an almost infinite set of intellectual tasks. Across all organizations, we expected ad hoc project teams to be reported most frequently and ongoing production teams to be reported least frequently. Furthermore, due to the physically demanding nature of the work, manufacturing and construction firms were expected to use production teams more than retail, service, and/or nonprofit organizations. Because of the extensive need to make decisions stemming from rapidly changing environments in the form of products, competitors, customers, distributors, and legal constraints, retail, service, and/or nonprofit organizations were expected to report using more project teams than production teams.

At the team level, we expected that a variety of characteristics would predict effectiveness. To begin with, we expected that the perceived conflict within groups would be the best predictor of their effectiveness, on the basis of the well-known input-process-output framework (McGrath & Altman, 1966) and the small but growing number of empirical studies that have found interpersonal conflict to be negatively related to effectiveness (e.g., Amason, 1996; Evan, 1965; Jehn, 1995). With regard to the composition and structural characteristics of the group, we expected that demographic diversity would be positively related to interpersonal conflict in all types of teams, positively related to effectiveness in project teams that stood to benefit from multiple perspectives, and negatively related to effectiveness in production teams focused on execution (Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Cox, 1996; Jackson, 1996; Milliken & Martins, 1996). Although we were also interested in the frequency with which teams were reported to engage in various types of tasks and the degree to which teams were supported by the human resource (HR)–personnel function within the organization, we had no basis for expecting particular trends in our data.

METHOD

SAMPLE

The data reported in this study were gathered from two samples of U.S. organizations.

Random Sample

The first sample consisted of 405 organizations randomly selected from an extensive listing of 6 million U.S. organizations published on CD-ROM for 1996. After determining the maximum size feasible for our budget, we stratified the sample according to standard industrial classification (SIC) codes, in an effort to increase its representativeness. The stratification process involved calculating the percentage of organizations falling into each SIC category in the population (as defined by our CD-ROM listing), and then randomly selecting a proportional number of organizations from each category for our sample. This produced the following SIC profile for the sample: (a) agriculture, forestry, or fishing (2.2%); (b) mining (1.5%); (c) construction (1.5%); (d) manufacturing (6.7%); (e) transportation/utilities (4.0%); (f) wholesale trade (21.5%); (g) retail trade (22.0%); (h) finance, insurance, or real estate (8.9%); (i) public administration (28.4%); and (j) other (2.7%). (Upward rounding associated with the assignment of percentages to the various categories was the reason for the discrepancy between the actual sample size of 405 and the target value of 400.)

A total of 38 surveys was returned to us without having been opened, due to incorrect or insufficient address information, yielding an operational sample of 367 organizations. From this sample, 80 organizations eventually responded, yielding a 21.8% response rate (i.e., 80/367). The distribution of SIC codes (as reported by respondents) was as follows: (a) agriculture, forestry, or fishing (8.2%); (b) mining (0%); (c) construction (2.7%); (d) manufacturing (6.8%); (e) transportation/public utilities (1.4%); (f) wholesale trade (4.1%); (g) retail trade (13.7%); (h) finance, insurance, or real

estate (12.3%); (i) public administration (6.3%); and (j) other (43.8%). The primary discrepancy between the SIC profile of the sample ($n = 405$) and the respondent set ($n = 80$) was the extremely large percentage of respondents who classified their organizations as *other*. Based on a short word or phrase describing their organizations' industrial/occupational category, most respondents provided enough information to allow their organizations to be categorized as one of the two trade categories (i.e., wholesale or retail) or as public administration (i.e., hospitals, agencies, or other human service organizations). In short, respondents tended to find the SIC classification system counterintuitive and often did not perceive any category to be appropriate for their organization.

Targeted Sample

The second sample consisted of 202 organizations known (or, in a few cases, suspected) to employ teams. These organizations were identified through examination of several trade publications and 6 months' of e-mail exchanges on the TeamNet list serve bulletin board (www.workteams.unt.edu). Of these, 16 envelopes were returned to us without having been opened, due to incorrect or insufficient address information, leaving an operative sample of 186 organizations. From this set, 48 responses were eventually received, yielding a 25.8% response rate (i.e., 48/186). Manufacturing organizations constituted 46% of the targeted sample respondents, and *nonclassifiable* accounted for 21%—the remaining responses were distributed fairly equally across the other categories with no category accounting for more than 7%.

Combined Sample

In total, after administering the survey twice to both samples, 128 responses were received from a total of 553 organizations that received surveys, yielding a 23.1% overall response rate. With regard to the identity of the individuals who responded to the survey, across both samples, 119 of the 128 respondents identified their position within the organization as belonging to one of the

following categories: (a) associate or staff (14%), (b) supervisor/ project manager (9%), (c) shift manager/general manager (9%), (d) HR specialist (17%), (e) vice president (8%), and (f) owner/ co-owner/ CEO/president (35%).

SURVEY MATERIALS

The questionnaire used in this research consisted of four major sections. The first two sections inquired about various organizational characteristics and the use of teams within the organization. The first section consisted of seven questions asking respondents to provide basic descriptive information about their organizations, including the number of part- and full-time employees and the year the organization was founded. A multiple-choice item asked respondents to identify the most appropriate industrial category from the set making up the SIC classification. A third set of dichotomous (yes-no) questions asked respondents to indicate whether the organization possessed each of the following: partnership/ proprietorship status, corporate status, multiple departments, multiple divisions, multiple locations, annual sales/revenue greater than $10 million, and annual sales revenue greater than $100 million. The second section contained definitions of the four team types and asked the respondent to indicate any and all types used by the organization.

The last two sections asked respondents to provide data about specific teams within the organization. The third section contained a set of nine questions asking about team characteristics for each of the four types of teams. For each of the four team types, space was provided for responses on three different teams, allowing information to be reported on 12 teams from each organization. Using a fill-in-the-blank format, respondents were asked to provide information on the number of men and women on the team and indicate with a *y* or *n* whether the following characterized each team: six possible tasks (different for project and production types); the existence of a formal leader; whether members were considered "peers," or equals; whether members were from different functional areas of the organization (project teams only); and whether

the team could operate without one of its members (production teams only). Perceived interpersonal conflict was measured with one Likert-type item consisting of five response options (e.g., 1 = *never any disputes of any kind*, 3 = *major disputes occur rarely; minor disputes occur frequently*, 5 = *major disputes or arguments occur frequently*). Perceived team effectiveness was measured using one Likert-type item with five response options (e.g., 1 = *rarely effective*, 3 = *sometimes effective*, 5 = *always effective*). The fourth section consisted of 12 yes-no questions addressing the role of teams and HR practices. In particular, items addressed the use of teams in selection, performance appraisal, training, compensation, and administrative decision making. Space was also provided on the last page for open-ended comments.

PROCEDURE

In choosing 405 organizations to survey from the 11 million contained in the population database, we stratified the sample according to the U.S. SIC to increase its representativeness. The initial mailing for the random sample occurred in spring 1997; the initial mailing for the targeted sample took place in fall 1997. Approximately 2 months after each initial mailing, a second copy of the survey was sent to all organizations that had not yet responded.

Where possible, the name of a specific individual working in HR was identified, along with the name of the company and a mailing address, but this was not possible for most organizations. When we were able to identify a specific individual, the survey was mailed to the organization and addressed to this individual; where no name was available, one of the following labels was used instead: "Director of Human Resources," "Owner," or "Office Manager." The label chosen was based on an educated guess stemming from the name of the organization. For organizations that appeared to be proprietorships or partnerships, envelopes were addressed to "Owner/Co-Owner." Organizations that appeared to be some form of corporation or nonprofit organization received a packet addressed to "Director of Human Resources" or "Office Manager."

RESULTS

OVERVIEW

This section is divided into several parts, corresponding to analyses of the dependent variables of interest. At the organizational level, we first examine the frequency of teams in general and the four specific types, focusing primarily on data from the random sample ($n = 80$). Following this, we present an analysis of contextual characteristics associated with the use of teams (and the various types) in organizations. Moving to the team level, we then present descriptive information on the tasks that teams perform and examine correlates of conflict and effectiveness at the team level for the combined sample ($n = 411$), broken down by the various team types. Finally, we look at how frequently teams are involved in, and supported by, various HR activities.

TEAM FREQUENCY (ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL)

A major purpose of this study was to estimate the frequency with which teams are used by organizations in the United States as a whole. Due to the nature of the research question, we used responses from the random sample to address this issue. Of the 80 respondents from the random sample, 48% indicated the use of one or more teams in their organizations (compared to a corresponding "reality check" figure of 88% for the targeted sample). Table 1 presents selected means, standard deviations, and correlations for organizational characteristics and the frequency of team usage in the three samples (i.e., random, targeted, combined). As is evident from inspection of the table, the best predictor of using teams was having a structure with multiple departments ($r = .46, p < .001$), followed by proprietorship/partnership status ($r = –.30, p = .01$). Several other variables had relationships with team usage of a magnitude of about .20, including the existence of multiple divisions ($r = .22$), multiple locations ($r = .18$), sales revenue greater than \$100 million ($r = .20$), and total number of employees ($r = .19$). On the other hand, team use was unrelated to founding year ($r = –.09$). We

entered the following eight independent variables into a regression equation predicting overall team usage to see how well they could account for team usage in the random sample: (a) total number of employees, (b) founding year, (c) multiple departments, (d) multiple divisions, (e) multiple locations, (f) proprietorship/partnership, (g) regional/national chain, and (h) annual sales greater than $100 million. Although these eight characteristics explained team usage moderately well ($R = .59$, $r^2 = .35$, adjusted $r^2 = .25$; $F[8, 54] = 3.56$, $p = .002$), having multiple departments was the only statistically significant predictor ($\beta = .47$, $p = .001$). Clearly, other factors are at work in determining the use of teams.

With regard to the frequency of particular team types, we anticipated that ad hoc and project types would be reported more frequently than ongoing and production types (respectively). Furthermore, we expected ad hoc project teams to be reported most frequently and ongoing production teams to be reported least frequently. Table 1 presents information with regard to the prevalence of team types at the organizational level, within and across the two samples. Although not displayed in the table, after collapsing temporal duration, the two project types were collectively more common than the two production types in the random sample (44% vs. 27%, respectively), but ad hoc teams were less frequently reported than ongoing teams (34% vs. 40%) after collapsing across product type. As is evident in Table 1, ongoing project teams were reported most frequently (38%), followed by ad hoc project teams (30%), ongoing production teams (22%), and ad hoc production teams (21%). Similar to the random sample, project types were reported more often than production types in the targeted sample (86% vs. 69%, respectively), but ongoing and ad hoc teams were reported with equal frequency (i.e., 85%). Rates for the four specific types in the targeted sample were 89% for ad hoc project teams, 81% for ongoing project teams, and 56% for the two production types.

In terms of organizational characteristics associated with the use of the four types in the random sample, the same variables related to overall team usage generally emerged again as the best predictors, with a few notable differences. The existence of multiple departments was not as strongly related to any of the four specific team

TABLE 1: Descriptive Information on the Frequency of Teams in Organizations

	Random Sample[a]					Targeted Sample[b]					Combined Sample[c]				
	Overall	Ad Hoc Project	Ongoing Project	Ad Hoc Production	Ongoing Production	Overall	Ad Hoc Project	Ongoing Project	Ad Hoc Production	Ongoing Production	Overall	Ad Hoc Project	Ongoing Project	Ad Hoc Production	Ongoing Production
Mean	.48	.30	.38	.21	.22	.88	.85	.81	.56	.56	.63	.51	.54	.34	.35
SD	.50	.46	.49	.41	.42	.33	.36	.39	.50	.50	.49	.50	.50	.48	.48
Founding year	−.09	−.14	−.20	−.22	−.22	−.25	−.16	−.25	−.21	−.18	−.27**	−.32**	−.34**	−.34**	−.32**
Multiple departments	.46**	.42**	.40**	.29*	.32**	.01	−.03	.05	.05	.25	.45**	−.45**	.42**	.31**	.39**
Multiple divisions	.22	.06	.32**	.25*	.33**	.24	.31*	.30*	.27	.36*	.37**	.39**	.45**	.39**	.45**
Multiple locations	.18	.05	.03	.18	.24*	.08	.17	.18	.09	.09	.29**	.29**	.24**	.26**	.29**
Corporation	.12	−.15	.17	−.02	.08	.27	.21	.13	.20	.43**	.23*	.08	.24**	.14	.26**
Proprietorship/ partnership	−.30**	−.12	−.34**	−.19	−.20	−.23	−.19	−.13	−.14	−.32*	−.33**	−.21*	−.33**	−.21*	−.27**
Chain	−.01	.06	.03	−.10	−.10	.11	.12	−.05	.29*	.29*	.10	.16	.07	.18	.17
Sales > $10 million	−.02	.00	.01	−.16	−.17	.08	.12	.07	.00	−.09	.10	.16	.13	.01	−.04
Sales > $100 million	.20	.30**	.11	.04	.04	.17	.23	.20	.35*	.52**	.34**	.45**	.34**	.38**	.45**
Total employees	.19	.24	.21	.31**	.28*	.10	.12	.14	.21	.24	.13	.18	.16	.23*	.23*

NOTE: All variables except founding year and total employees are dichotomous (0 = no, 1 = yes).
a. n = 80 organizations.
b. n = 48 organizations.
c. n = 128 organizations.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

types as it was to overall team usage, but it was a slightly better predictor of project teams than production teams; conversely, founding year was a better predictor of each of the four specific types than overall team usage. Furthermore, several characteristics were more strongly associated with the use of production teams than project teams (i.e., multiple locations, sales greater than $10 million).

We also expected that the frequency of the four team types would vary as a function of industry classification. Given the many ways industries could be classified, we opted for a fairly simple and conventional division: (a) blue collar organizations (i.e., agriculture, -forestry, fishing, mining, construction, manufacturing, and transportation/utilities), (b) white collar organizations (i.e., wholesale or retail trade, finance, insurance, real estate, or public administration), and (c) nonprofit organizations (i.e., health care, education, or public services). We anticipated that blue collar organizations would report using more production teams than project teams whereas white collar organizations would report using more project teams than production teams. To examine this issue, we cross-classified team type (project, production, ad hoc, ongoing) and industry type (blue collar, white collar, nonprofit), using the random sample, and conducted chi-square analyses. Table 2 presents the results of these four analyses. For all four team types, the chi-square value was significant, suggesting that the occurrence of the various types was not independent of industrial classification. Of particular note, nonprofit organizations emerged as the biggest users of teams (81%), followed by blue collar organizations (50%), and then white collar organizations (34%). It was somewhat surprising that this general pattern held up for all four team types, suggesting nonprofit organizations may be the biggest users of teams in the general population.

Overall, these data suggest that about one half of the organizations in the United States use teams, and those that do use teams tend to have a more complex structure, generate more revenue, and employ more personnel. Ongoing project teams appear to be the most common team type used, followed by ad hoc project teams; but production types existed in about one fifth of the responding organizations. The best predictor of usage of teams in general, as

TABLE 2:   Chi-Square Results for Industry and Type of Team in the Random Sample

Industry Code	Ad Hoc Project			Ongoing Project			Ad Hoc Production			Ongoing Production			Teams in General		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Blue collar	2	11	13	5	9	14	2	11	13	3	11	14	8	8	16
White collar	7	27	34	9	25	34	2	32	34	3	31	34	12	23	35
Nonprofit	15	6	21	15	6	21	13	8	21	12	9	21	17	4	21
Total	24	44	68	29	40	69	17	51	68	18	51	69	37	35	72
χ^2 (2)	17.48**			11.06**			22.52**			15.92**			11.46**		

** $p < .01$.

well as the four specific types, was the existence of multiple depart-
ments in the organization's structure, suggesting many teams are
cross-functional in nature. Furthermore, according to these data,
nonprofit organizations are most likely to use teams whereas white
collar organizations are least likely.

TEAM CHARACTERISTICS AND TASKS

One of the goals of this study was to get a better sense of what
teams are being asked to do in organizational settings. Table 3 pre-
sents descriptive data on the composition, structure, and task
assignments of 411 teams described by respondents ($M = 5.5$ teams
per respondent, $SD = 3.74$). Overall, 33% were labeled as ad hoc
project teams, 30% as ongoing project teams, 20% as ongoing pro-
duction teams, and 18% as ad hoc production teams.

With regard to composition and structure, a number of general
trends emerged in both the random and targeted samples: (a) Con-
sensus was the primary decision-making technique used within
teams (71%); (b) average team size was about 11 persons; (c) most
teams had a formal leader (64%), yet members were considered
equals (75%); (d) project teams tended to be cross-functional
(75%); and (e) production teams tended to be able to function with-
out one of their members (88%). On the other hand, the random
sample differed in some respects from the targeted sample: (a) Con-
sensus was used slightly less often as the primary decision-making
technique in favor of team leader/expert decision making (62% vs.
76%), (b) the ratio of men to women was more equal (46% vs. 66%)
as a result of including more women ($M = 6.01$ vs. 2.95), (c) teams
were more likely to have a formal leader (73% vs. 59%), (d) per-
ceived conflict was somewhat lower ($M = 2.39$ vs. 2.68), and (e)
perceived effectiveness was somewhat higher ($M = 4.05$ vs. 3.79).
All of these differences were statistically significant.

The lower half of Table 3 provides information on the kinds of
things that teams do in organizations. In general, across both sam-
ples, the most commonly reported task characteristics were (a)
interacting with a stream of customers (58%), (b) solving quality
problems (57%), (c) building products (53%), (d) formulating

TABLE 3: Descriptive Information on Team-Level Composition, Structure, and Task Characteristics

	Random Sample	Targeted Sample	Effect Size[a]	Combined Sample
Composition and structure	$(n = 139)$[b]	$(n = 272)$[b]		$(n = 411)$[b]
Decision-making technique: consensus	62%	76%	+.15**	71%
Decision-making technique: management	10%	9%	–.01	9%
Decision-making technique: leader or expert	15%	8%	–.12*	10%
Decision-making technique: team vote	12%	8%	–.08	9%
Formal leader with power	73%	59%	–.14**	64%
Mean number of men	5.20	7.10	+.10	6.45
Mean number of women	6.01	2.95	–.24**	3.93
Mean percentage of men	46%	66%	+.29**	59%
Members considered equals/peers	81%	73%	–.11*	75%
Members from different functional areas[c]	78%	73%	–.05	75%
Operate without one member[d]	92%	87%	–.07	88%
Modal age range[e]	11-20 years	11-20 years	N/A	11-20 years
Perceived conflict[f]	2.39	2.68	.18**	2.58
Perceived effectiveness accomplishing goals[g]	4.05	3.79	–.17**	3.88
Task responsibilities				
Project team type	$(n = 86)$[b]	$(n = 172)$[b]		$(n = 258)$[b]
Work with single client	35%	30%	–.05	31%
Develop ads/marketing	39%	15%	–.27**	23%
Schedule work or personnel	48%	35%	–.14*	39%
Develop products/conduct research	60%	31%	–.28**	40%
Solve quality problems	64%	54%	–.09	57%
Formulate strategy	62%	40%	–.18**	47%
Production team types	$(n = 53)$[b]	$(n = 100)$[b]		$(n = 153)$[b]
Perform artistically	11%	9%	–.04	10%
Perform competitively	15%	14%	–.01	15%
Maintain equipment	19%	50%	+.30**	39%
Transport people or cargo	32%	20%	–.13	24%
Interact with stream of customers	60%	57%	–.04	58%
Build/construct/assemble products	47%	56%	+.08	53%
Provide public service	62%	21%	–.41**	36%

a. Correlation of variable (i.e., Φ or r_{ptbis}) with sample (1 = random, 2 = targeted).
b. Listed n is maximum for type; actual n differed somewhat for each variable.
c. Project teams only.
d. Production teams only.
e. One-item, ordinal scale (1 = $\approx$5 years; 2 = *6-10 years*; 3 = *11-20 years*; 4 = *21 years*).
f. One-item, Likert-type scale (1 = *never any disputes of any kind*, 5 = *major disputes occur frequently*).
g. One-item, Likert-type scale (1 = *rarely*, 3 = *sometimes*, 5 = *always*).
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

strategy (48%), and (e) developing new products (40%). Within each sample, the relative incidence rates are strikingly similar, but the absolute percentages tend to be higher for the random sample, suggesting teams in these organizations are used more flexibly than teams in the targeted sample. We also examined these task characteristics as a function of team type. In general, task characteristics for both project and production types differed little as a function of whether the team was short term or long term. Project teams were most frequently reported to (a) solve product quality problems (57%); (b) formulate business strategy (47 %); and (c) develop new products, clients, or markets (40%). Production teams tended to (a) interact with a stream of customers or clients (58%); (b) build, construct, or assemble products (53%); and (c) maintain/service machinery or equipment (39%).

TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

Given the conflicting information with regard to the effects of diversity in the literature, we were also interested in the relationships between composition, structure, conflict, and effectiveness for the various team types. To examine these issues, we calculated relationships between the four team types and the following team-level characteristics: (a) proportion of males, (b) gender diversity (proportion male, proportion female), (c) status diversity (i.e., members considered equals), (d) age diversity (i.e., range of member ages), (e) functional diversity (i.e., members from different areas of the organization), (f) team size, (g) task interdependency (i.e., operating without a member), and (h) primary decision-making technique within the team. Based on the literature, we expected higher scores on the six composition characteristics (i.e., the first six above) to be positively related to perceived conflict in all teams, positively related to perceived effectiveness for the two project types, and negatively related to effectiveness for the two production types. As we had no reason to expect focal relationships to differ by sample and wanted to maximize statistical power, we calculated correlations between each characteristic and perceived

TABLE 4:   Correlates of Perceived Conflict and Perceived Effectiveness at the Team Level

	Ad Hoc Project[a]		Ongoing Project[b]		Ad Hoc Production[c]		Ongoing Production[d]	
	Conflict	*Effectiveness*	*Conflict*	*Effectiveness*	*Conflict*	*Effectiveness*	*Conflict*	*Effectiveness*
Structural variable								
Decision-making method: consensus	.01	.02	.05	.15	.04	.13	−.19	.23*
Decision-making method: management	.00	−.10	−.13	−.08	−.22	.04	.18	−.19
Decision-making method: voting	−.05	.02	.06	−.05	.13	−.27*	−.06	.09
Decision-making method: team leader or expert	.03	.02	.04	−.12	−.02	.05	.15	−.21
Existence of formal leader	−.08	−.05	−.28**	.02	−.05	.22	−.16	.06
Operate without one member					.03	−.16	.08	−.04
Composition variable								
Percentage of men	.09	−.09	−.09	.07	−.09	−.09	.20	.07
Gender diversity	.01	.16	.00	−.02	−.05	.03	−.25*	.15
Team size	.16	−.23*	.19*	−.40**	.07	−.13	.12	−.10
Status diversity	−.10	.00	−.20*	−.11	−.06	.08	.05	.07
Functional diversity	.18*	−.08	.02	.13				
Age diversity	.07	−.17	−.15	−.05	.25*	−.15	.17	−.10
Process variable								
Perceived conflict		−.37**		−.41**		−.45**		−.43**

a. n = 105-133.
b. n = 103-122.
c. n = 53-72.
d. n = 61-81.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

conflict, based on the combined sample of teams. Results are displayed in Table 4.

Considering all types of teams, three general conclusions seem warranted: (a) Perceived conflict was moderately related to perceived effectiveness, accounting for roughly 16% of the observed variance in each of the four team types; (b) team size was positively related to conflict and negatively related to effectiveness across all team types; and (c) there was no clear pattern with regard to the effects of team structure and composition on conflict and effectiveness.

A few comments seem in order after inspecting Table 4. First, the consistency of the relationship between conflict and effectiveness across the four types is striking and very consistent with our expectations, based on the empirical literature. Second, the composition variables tend to have unique patterns of relationship with conflict and effectiveness. Age diversity was positively correlated with conflict for three of the four team types (particularly the two production types) but negatively correlated with conflict in ongoing project groups. Functional diversity was positively correlated with conflict in ad hoc project groups but unrelated to conflict in ongoing project teams and effectiveness in both project types. The two gender variables (i.e., diversity, proportion of males) tended to have weak and inconsistent relationships with conflict for three of the four team types, but both were moderately related to conflict in ongoing production teams. Gender diversity had a negative correlation with conflict in ongoing production teams ($r = -.25$) whereas the percentage of men had a positive correlation with it ($r = .20$). Status diversity was weakly, positively related to conflict in all four team types, with the relationship strongest for ongoing project teams ($r = .20$). Finally, team size was positively related to conflict (.07 to .19) and negatively related to effectiveness (–.10 to –.40), with stronger relationships for the two project types. With regard to team structural variables, the two most reliable and interpretable patterns are the following: (a) The use of consensus as the primary team decision-making technique was positively related to effectiveness in all four team types, particularly ongoing production teams; and (b) the existence of a formal leader was negatively

related to conflict across all four types and positively related to effectiveness in ad hoc production teams ($r = .22$).

When regression equations were run for each team type, with team effectiveness as the dependent variable and perceived effectiveness entered at Step 1, the resulting increase in r^2, when the composition and structural variables were entered at Step 2, was small (6%-17%) and only achieved statistical significance for ongoing project teams due to the strong association between effectiveness and team size. Thus, other than team size, the composition and structural variables considered here added little to the prediction of effectiveness over and above perceived conflict. Overall, these data suggest that perceived conflict is a reasonably good predictor of team effectiveness whereas the structural and composition variables examined may have weaker and less consistent relationships with conflict and effectiveness that differ as a function of team type. Furthermore, there is little support for the notion that conflict mediates the impact of the input variables on team effectiveness.

TEAMS' USE OF/INVOLVEMENT IN HR ACTIVITIES

A final set of questions inquired about the use of teams for HR purposes, and the relevant data is presented in Table 5. Perhaps the most striking trend in these data concerned the higher relative frequencies associated with the use and/or involvement of teams in the targeted sample. On all but one item (i.e., promotion decisions), teams were more actively used and/or involved in the targeted sample by 10% to 20%.

Looking at the combined sample, some interesting trends were apparent. First, the most common use of teams in HR activities centered on personnel selection. With regard to HR activities, teams were most frequently asked to conduct panel interviews with applicants (69%), screen resumes/applications (54%), and make final hiring decisions (54%). Furthermore, 64% of organizations that use teams reported keeping the personalities of other team members in mind during team formation or replacement selection.

TABLE 5:   Descriptive Data on Human Resources Practices for Organizations Using Teams

Do organizations use the following practices?[a]	Random Sample[b] (%)	Targeted Sample[c] (%)	Effect Size[d]	Combined Sample[e] (%)
Selection practice				
Keep personalities of team members in mind during selection?	65	64	–.00	64
Screen resumes or applications?	61	49	–.13	54
Use panels to interview applicants?	61	74	.14	69
Make hiring decisions?	48	59	.11	54
Compensation practice				
Pay based in part on team performance?	26	36	.11	31
Pay based solely on team performance?	0	5	.15	3
Performance appraisal practice				
Have team members provide feedback to each other?	32	54	.22	44
Formally appraise team performance?	32	36	.04	34
Training practice				
Train as a team on interpersonal skills or dealing with diversity?	29	74	.45**	54
Train as a team using simulations or live practice?	36	69	.34**	54
Administrative practice				
Make promotion decisions?	29	21	–.10	24
Make firing decisions?	19	28	.10	24

a. Response scale: 0 = no, 1 = yes.
b. n = 31 organizations.
c. n = 39 organizations.
d. Lambda (Φ) correlation with sample (1 = random, 2 = targeted).
e. n = 70 organizations.
** $p < .01$.

A second interesting finding concerned the relative lack of support for teams in terms of compensation and performance appraisal. Merely one third of the organizations using teams reported that they formally appraise team performance (32% for random sample, 36% for targeted sample). Even fewer provided material incentives for achieving team goals. Only 26% of organizations in the random sample and 36% in the targeted sample based pay in part on team performance; no organization in the random sample and only two (5%) in the targeted sample based employee compensation completely on team performance.

By contrast, teams appear to receive more support from organizations when it comes to training activities although differences across sample are most notable here. Only 36% of random sample organizations using teams reported using live practice or simulations to train teams as a whole whereas 69% of the targeted sample reported doing so. The discrepancy between samples is even greater with regard to the use of interpersonal or diversity training, with only 29% of the random sample organizations that use teams reporting such training, compared to 74% of the targeted sample organizations. This difference may stem from the fact that larger and more profitable organizations are more likely to have training programs in general and especially more likely to have workforces diverse enough to warrant such training.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the use of teams was not generally reported for making personnel decisions involving termination (24%) or promotion (24%). Compared to selection-related activities that often occur with large samples or cohorts, it seems reasonable that the use of teams for promotion and termination decisions would be lower in that these decisions are often made for individuals on a case-by-case basis. To the extent this is true, it may well be too costly in terms of time, effort, and money to use teams for this purpose.

DISCUSSION

SUMMARY

The overall goal of this study was to learn more about how teams are used in real organizations—specifically how common they are, what they are asked to do, what they are like, and what factors are associated with team effectiveness. To aid this effort, we proposed a preliminary taxonomy of team types in organizational settings and created a questionnaire instrument seeking information on specific teams of each type. Based on 80 responses from a random sample of U.S. organizations, we estimate that approximately one half of U.S. organizations use teams of one type or another, with ongoing

project teams being the most common type. Furthermore, organizations that use teams tend to have a larger scope in that they earn more revenue, have more sophisticated structures (i.e., multiple departments, divisions, and locations), and have larger staffs. Based on responses from 128 organizations in both samples, teams tend to be peer-oriented but contain a formal leader, consist of about 11 persons on average, and make decisions based on consensus. Low levels of reported conflict and smaller team size are associated with higher levels of team effectiveness whereas the different types of diversity examined here tended to have weak (but unique) patterns of association with both conflict and effectiveness. In this section, we discuss some implications of these data, limitations of the study, and where to go from here.

IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Team Types

There are certainly many ways of classifying groups or teams in organizational settings, and there may well be no best way to do it. Classification systems should be judged on the degree to which they aid in the organization and interpretation of data. Several classification schemes have been offered in the past 30 years, but none has become widely accepted. In particular, typologies based on key contextual dimensions tend to be based on the group's task instead of the broader arena in which they operate. The distinction is not trivial; many organizational teams (especially ongoing types) perform a series of distinct yet related tasks and thus cannot be definitively classified based on what they do. As a result, we felt it is more constructive to focus on the team, the general type of work performed (i.e., information processing tasks vs. behavioral tasks), and the temporal nature (i.e., ad hoc vs. ongoing) of the team's existence. These dimensions are important in that they suggest ways that the models underlying team effectiveness differ, according to context. For instance, information processing tasks usually involve copious amounts of task-relevant information, discrepant goals and personal values, perceptions of risk, and extensive verbal

interaction whereas behavioral tasks typically involve psychomotor and physical skills and abilities, the execution of learned or automatic motor sequences, and real-time coordination of member actions. Intuitively, the factors that determine how well these team types function seem likely to be different. A good classification scheme would help researchers identify the factors that are important when staffing and training particular kinds of work teams. In this article, we have identified a simple framework based on these two dimensions that identifies four general types of teams found in organizations. We hope this scheme will be of some value to researchers and practitioners attempting to interpret the data reported here as well as in past research. In the future, researchers should be explicit about the types they are studying and select variables based on their theoretical importance to the team in question.

Use of Teams and Team Types in the Organizational Population

The primary limitation of our findings is the relatively low response rate we obtained from both of our surveys. However, given the nature of the survey (i.e., random sample, no internal contacts, organizational relocations and failures), response rates will almost always be lower than those obtained with single organizations. The data gathered here present a preliminary picture of something we know little about, but they do have limitations. It would be unwise to draw strong conclusions about the use of teams in general until these findings are supported by further empirical work.

With this caveat in mind, the findings in this study are in some ways consistent with expectations based on logic and past research, but they also differ in several respects. Reported frequency of team use was lower in the random sample than in the two previous longitudinal surveys (i.e., Gordon, 1992; "Industry Report," 1995; Lawler et al., 1995); this is understandable, given the previous longitudinal surveys' focus on large, elite organizations, and it is consistent with the best organizational predictors of team usage found in this study. Furthermore, the obtained incidence rate of teams in the random sample (48%) provides some hard support for the

anecdotal notion that teams have spread widely throughout U.S. organizations. Even if one allows for a fairly wide confidence interval around this point estimate (e.g., ± 10%), the conclusion would still hold. With regard to the specific team types, the finding that ad hoc project teams were most common in the targeted sample was not surprising, given that these teams tend to have the fewest physical requirements and require little if any extended support. On the other hand, ongoing project teams were the most frequently reported in the random sample. This discrepancy may simply be sampling error, or it could stem from real differences in the way teams are used in organizations, as a function of organizational context. Although production teams were not as common as project types, they were by no means rare, and we echo McGrath's (1984) concerns that more research needs to be conducted on teams that perform behavioral-physical tasks.

Team Characteristics

The descriptive data reported here are the first of their kind that we are aware of and suggest several things. First, given the extent to which consensus was the primary vehicle for making team decisions, more research should be conducted on the merits of this approach as opposed to others. Second, there is growing evidence of the deleterious effect of conflict within work groups, and additional research should be conducted on the advantages and disadvantages of techniques designed to stimulate conflict within decision-making groups to achieve a deeper analysis and synthesis of information (e.g., devil's advocacy, dialectical inquiry). Third, as most teams reported being able to function without one of their members, additional research could provide a better understanding of the role of task interdependence among team members and the relationship between this variable and others such as coordination, cohesion, efficiency, and effectiveness. Fourth, the prevalence of cross-functional project teams suggests the importance of research on teams that consist of members from multiple disciplines or departments.

Structure and Composition Effects

Perhaps the most surprising result—and the one most at odds with the literature—was the finding that composition and structural input variables were only weakly related to both conflict and effectiveness. Managers and executives are bombarded with messages suggesting that diversity is valuable. Past research has suggested that diversity promotes conflict in general and that conflict can have a beneficial effect in tasks involving creativity or decision making but can be a hindrance for production/execution tasks (Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Jackson, 1996; Milliken & Martins, 1996). In this study, there was no general pattern whereby higher scores on the composition variables (i.e., greater diversity, larger size, more men) corresponded to higher levels of conflict and lower levels of effectiveness—each composition variable tended to have a unique pattern of relationships with the two outcome variables. At least two explanations are possible at this point: (a) Composition variables are fairly weakly related to conflict and effectiveness, but the direction and magnitude of relationships differs as a function of team type; or (b) the pattern of observed relationships in this study results from measurement error and/or respondent bias, stemming from insufficient familiarity with the teams described. In particular, one individual probably provided all the data in most responses and may have taken some educated guesses or made mistakes. On the other hand, lack of familiarity was probably not a serious problem for the respondents in the smaller organizations where owners or managers were intimately familiar with their personnel and team-based structures. We also tried, in general, to limit the cognitive burden on respondents by using dichotomous, yes-no items that did not call for fine distinctions.

To address the issue of respondent bias more directly, we examined the within-organization variance for team characteristics measured on a continuous scale (i.e., conflict, effectiveness, team size, percentage of men, age range) and conducted within and between analyses of variance (WABA) for these variables, with organization (i.e., respondent) serving as the between-groups factor. Respondent bias would be a less likely explanation in the face

of large standard deviations for the listed characteristics and non-significant tests for the significance of the organization factor in the WABA. In general, however, within-organization standard deviations were relatively small, and the WABA produced a number of significant F ratios for the between-teams factor, indicating differences across organizations/respondents but a good deal of similarity within organizations/respondents. Unfortunately, it is difficult to interpret even these results unambiguously, given the lack of true scores for each team—it is simply impossible to say how much within-organization variance should be present. It is likely that factors above the team level operate to reduce the heterogeneity of teams in organizations—for example, attraction, selection, and attrition processes at the organizational level (Schneider, 1987).

In future research, in addition to replication, several resource-intensive steps could be taken to decrease the possibility of respondent bias/error (or reduce its impact). First, random-dial telephone methodologies could be used to improve the quality of information. Interviewers have the ability to clarify ambiguous answers, probe for more details, and pose follow-up questions. Second, two copies of the survey could be sent, along with the request that two knowledgeable individuals fill out the survey, to allow some measure of interrater agreement/reliability. Third, the primary respondent could be asked to provide contact information for knowledgeable individuals within each team, and these persons could be contacted directly. This would allow the collection of more specific data with regard to activities, composition effects, conflict, and perceived effectiveness as well as increase the quality of the data.

Teams and HR Activities

Finally, the data with regard to the use and support of teams for HR purposes are the first of their kind of which we are aware. Organizations appear to use teams considerably for purposes of selection but do not support them well in terms of team-level performance feedback and compensation. Furthermore, at least in the

random sample, teams do not appear to receive sufficient support with regard to whole-team training. Just like any organizational intervention, sound HR policies and procedures must be put in place to support the use of teams (Hackman, 1987, 1998; Sundstrom, 1999). Our data suggest that much more could be done to aid and encourage team effectiveness and hint at a paradox in organizations: a great deal of time, effort, and perhaps money is spent in creating teams, but little is done for them once they are in place. However, before any sermons are initiated, it is important to keep in mind that the data on HR use/involvement in this study were gathered and analyzed at the organizational level, not the team level. Some organizations that use teams might not support them with training, compensation, or performance feedback because they employ limited numbers in general or confine usage to parallel teams operating outside the organization's formal structure (e.g., quality circles). Future research could shed light on this issue by acquiring HR use/involvement information at the team level.

CONCLUSION

This article provides descriptive data on the prevalence, characteristics, and duties of teams in general, proposes a tentative taxonomy for organizational team types, and reports additional data on the relationship between team input variables and effectiveness. Teams are a widespread phenomenon in U.S. organizations, and there are reliable correlates of their use. Project teams tend to be more common than production teams, but both types are widespread. The typical team performs multiple tasks, tends to make decisions by consensus, has a formal leader, operates nonhierarchically as a peer group, and is moderately diverse with regard to age and gender. Conflict is associated with lower effectiveness (as is larger size in project teams); the relationship of composition and structural characteristics with conflict and effectiveness may well be complex and variable across team type. Future research should continue to improve our understanding of what teams do and what variables are important for particular types.

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