AN INTRODUCTION TO GROUP WORK PRACTICE, 5/e

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chapter 3

Understanding Group Dynamics

The forces that result from the interactions of group members are often referred to as *group dynamics.* Because group dynamics influence the behavior of both individual group members and the group as a whole, they have been of considerable interest to group workers for many years (Coyle, 1930, 1937; Elliott, 1928).

A thorough understanding of group dynamics is useful for practicing effectively with any type of group. Although many theories have been developed to conceptualize group functioning, fundamental to all of them is an understanding of groups as social systems (Anderson, 1979). A system is made up of elements and their interactions. As social systems, therefore, task and treatment groups can be conceptualized as individuals in interaction with each other.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HELPFUL GROUP DYNAMICS

One of the worker's most important tasks is to help groups develop dynamics that promote the satisfaction of members' socioemotional needs while facilitating the accomplishment of group tasks. Some years ago, Northen (1969) reminded group workers that this is not an automatic process.

Inattention to group dynamics can have a negative effect on the meeting of members' socioemotional needs and on goal attainment. Groups can unleash both harmful and helpful forces. The Hitler youth movement of the 1920s and 1930s, the Ku Klux Klan, the religious groups in Jonestown and at the Branch Davidians' ranch in Waco, Texas, and other harmful cults are familiar examples of group dynamics gone awry. Studies over the past thirty years have clearly shown that harmful group dynamics can be very traumatic for group members, with some emotional effects lasting years after the group experience (Galinsky & Schopler, 1977; Lieberman, Yalom, & Miles, 1973; Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2001; Smokowski, Rose, Todar, & Reardon, 1999). Two extremes of group leadership, aggressive confrontation and extreme passivity, seem to have particularly pernicious effects on mem-

bers (Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2001; Smokowski et al., 1999). In contrast, appropriate development of group dynamics can lead to positive outcomes for the group and its members (Bednar & Kaul, 1994).

This chapter seeks to help group workers recognize and understand the dynamics generated through the group process. People who are familiar with group dynamics are less likely to be victimized by harmful leaders and groups. The chapter is also designed to help workers establish and promote group dynamics that satisfy members' socioemotional needs and that help groups achieve goals consistent with the humanistic value base of the social work profession. Some strategies for doing this follow.

Strategies for Promoting Helpful Group Dynamics

- Identify group dynamics as they emerge during ongoing group interaction
- Assess the impact of group dynamics on group members and the group as a whole
- Assess the impact of current group dynamics on future group functioning
- Examine the impact of group dynamics on members from different racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds
- Facilitate and guide the development of group dynamics that lead to members' satisfaction with their participation and that enable the group to achieve its goals

GROUP DYNAMICS

In this text, four dimensions of group dynamics are of particular importance to group workers in understanding and working effectively with all types of task and treatment groups:

1. Communication and interaction patterns
2. Cohesion
3. Social integration and influence
4. Group culture

In-depth knowledge of group dynamics is essential for understanding the social structure of groups and for developing beginning-level skills in group work practice.

Communication and Interaction Patterns

According to Northen (1969), "Social interaction is a term for the dynamic interplay of forces in which contact between persons results in a modification of the behavior and attitudes of the participants" (p. 17). Verbal and nonverbal communications are the components of social interaction. Communication is the process by which people convey meanings to each other by using symbols. Communication entails (1) the encoding of a person's perceptions,

thoughts, and feelings into language and other symbols, (2) the transmission of these symbols or language, and (3) the decoding of the transmission by another person. This process is shown in Figure 3.1. As members of a group communicate to one another, a reciprocal pattern of interaction emerges. The interaction patterns that develop can be beneficial or harmful to the group. A group worker who is knowledgeable about helpful communications and interactions can intervene in the patterns that are established to help the group achieve desired goals and to ensure the socioemotional satisfaction of members.

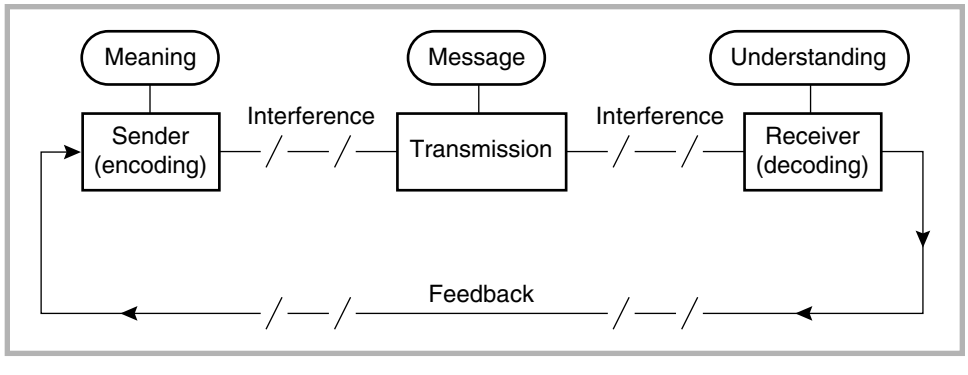
Communication can be verbal, nonverbal, or written. Whereas members of face-to-face groups experience verbal and nonverbal communications, members of telephone groups experience only verbal communications, and members of computer groups experience only written messages. Communication can also be synchronous, that is, back and forth in real time, or asynchronous, that is, not within the same time frame. Asynchronous communications occur in computer groups where members may respond to messages after they are posted on bulletin boards or in chat rooms.

Communication as a Process

The first step in understanding and intervening in interaction patterns is for the worker to be aware that, whenever people are together in face-to-face groups, they are communicating. Even if they are not communicating verbally, their nonverbal behaviors communicate intended and unintended messages.

As shown in Figure 3.1, all communications are intended to convey a message. Silence, for example, can communicate sorrow, thoughtfulness, anger, or lack of interest. In addition, every group member communicates not only to transmit information but also for many other reasons. Kiesler (1978) has suggested that people communicate with such interpersonal concerns as (1) understanding other people, (2) finding out where they stand in relation to other people, (3) persuading others, (4) gaining or maintaining power, (5) defending themselves, (6) provoking a reaction from others, (7) making an impression on others, (8) gaining or maintaining relationships, and (9) presenting a unified image to the group.

FIGURE 3.1 ● *A Model of the Process of Communication*



Many other important reasons for communication could be added to this list. For example, Barker and colleagues (2000) highlight the importance of relational aspects of communication such as cooperation, connection, autonomy, similarity, flexibility, harmony, and stigmatization.

Workers who are aware that group members communicate for many reasons can observe, assess, and understand communication and interaction patterns. Because patterns of communication are often consistent across different situations, group workers can use this information to work with individual members and the group as a whole. For example, a worker observes that one member is consistently unassertive in the group. The worker might help the member practice responding assertively to situations in the group. Because the pattern of a lack of assertiveness is likely to occur in situations outside the group, the worker suggests that the member consider practicing the skills in situations encountered between meetings.

In addition to meanings transmitted in every communication, the worker should also be aware that messages are often received selectively. *Selective perception* refers to the screening of messages so they are congruent with one's belief system. As shown in Figure 3.1, messages are decoded and their meanings are received. Individual group members have a unique understanding of communications on the basis of their selective perception. Selected screening sometimes results in the blocking of messages so that they are not decoded and received. Napier and Gershenfeld (1993) suggest that the perception of a communication can be influenced by (1) life positions that result from experiences in early childhood, (2) stereotypes, (3) the status and position of the communicator, (4) previous experiences, and (5) assumptions and values. Thus, what might appear to a naive observer as a simple, straightforward, and objective social interaction might have considerable hidden meaning for both the sender and the receiver.

It is not possible, or even desirable, for workers to analyze each interpersonal communication that occurs in a group. However, with a little practice, workers can develop a "third ear," that is, become aware of the meanings behind messages and their effect on a particular group member and on the group as a whole. Group workers are in a much better position to intervene in the group when they have a full understanding of the meanings of the messages being communicated and received by each member.

It is particularly important for the worker to pay attention to the nonverbal messages that are communicated by members. Body language, gestures, and facial expressions can provide important clues about how members are reacting to verbal communications. Members may not want to verbalize negative feelings, or they may just not know how to express their feelings. When workers are attuned to nonverbal messages, they can verbalize the feelings conveyed in them. This, in turn, may encourage members to talk about issues that they were previously only able to express nonverbally. For example, without identifying particular members who may be uncomfortable being associated with a particular sentiment, the worker might say "I noticed some tension in the group when we began to talk about. . . . I am wondering if anyone would like to share their feelings about this." Similarly, the worker might say "I thought I noticed a little boredom when we began talking about. . . . Has that topic been exhausted? Would you like to move on to the other issues we were going to discuss?"

Communications can also be distorted in transmission. In Figure 3.1, distortion is represented as interference. Among the most common transmission problems are language barriers.

In the United States, workers frequently conduct groups with members from different cultural backgrounds and for whom English is a second language. In addition to problems of understanding accents and dialects, the meanings of many words are culturally defined and may not be interpreted as the communicator intended. Special care must be taken in these situations to avoid distorting the meanings intended by the communicator (Kadushin & Kadushin, 1997).

Noise and other distortions inside or outside the meeting room can interfere with effective communication. Similarly, hearing or eyesight problems can create difficulties in receiving messages. For example, almost one third of older people suffer from hearing impairments (Jette, 2001), and 25 percent suffer from visual impairments (Lighthouse, 1995). Thus, when working with groups, the practitioner should be alert to physical problems that may impair communication. Some strategies for working with members with visual impairments and hearing impairments are presented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

Although meaning is communicated in every verbal and nonverbal message, it is also important for workers to be aware that problems in sending or receiving messages can distort or obfuscate intended meanings. Even when messages are clear, language barriers and cultural interpretations of the meaning conveyed in a message may mean that it is not received as intended (Anderson & Carter, 2003). This can be a particularly vexing problem for members from bilingual backgrounds for whom English is a second language (Sue & Sue, 1999). It has been pointed out, for example, that white Americans have a significantly higher rate of verbal participation in groups than Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Mexican Americans of similar educational background (Gray-Little & Kaplan, 2000). Because higher rates of verbal participation in groups are associated with reduced attrition and other therapeutic benefits, lower levels of participation by minority members of multicultural groups is troubling (Gray-Little

TABLE 3.1 ● *Techniques for Communicating with Group Members Who Have Hearing Impairments*

1. Position yourself so you are in full view of the person and your face is illuminated.
2. Speak in a normal voice.
3. Speak slowly and clearly. Stress key words. Pause between sentences.
4. Make sure no one else is talking when a group member is speaking to a hearing-impaired person or when a hearing-impaired person is speaking to a group member.
5. Make sure the room is free of background noises and has good acoustics.
6. Look for cues, such as facial expressions or inappropriate responses, that indicate the individual has misunderstood.
7. If you suspect that the individual has misunderstood, restate what has been said.
8. Speak *to* the individual, not *about* the person.

Adapted from Blazer, 1978.

TABLE 3.2 ● *Techniques for Communicating with Group Members Who Have Visual Impairments*

1. Ask the individual whether assistance is needed to get to the meeting room. If the reply is yes, offer your elbow. Walk a half step ahead so your body indicates a change in direction, when to stop, and so forth.
2. Introduce yourself and all group members when the meeting begins. Go around the group clockwise or counterclockwise. This will help the group member learn where each member is located.
3. When you accompany a visually impaired person into a new meeting room, describe the layout of the room, the furniture placement, and any obstacles. This will help orient the individual.
4. Try not to disturb the placement of objects in the meeting room. If this is unavoidable, be sure to inform the person about the changes. Similarly, let the individual know if someone leaves or enters the room.
5. When guiding visually impaired individuals to their seat, place their hand on the back of the chair and allow them to seat themselves.
6. Speak directly to the visually impaired person, not through an intermediary.
7. Look at the individual when you speak.
8. Don't be afraid to use words such as *look* and *see.*
9. Speak in a normal voice. Do not shout.
10. Visually impaired people value independence just as sighted people do. Do not be overprotective.
11. Give explicit instructions about the location of coffee or snacks, and during program activities. For example, state, "The coffee pot is 10 feet to the left of your chair," rather than "The coffee pot is right over there on your left."

Adapted from a handout prepared by The Lighthouse, 111 E. 59th St., New York, NY 10222.

& Kaplan, 2000). Therefore, when English is a second language, care should be taken to ensure that members understand what is being said and that they feel comfortable contributing to the group discussion. Workers can often help by ensuring that minority members have ample opportunity to speak and that their points of view are carefully considered by the group.

To prevent distortions in communications from causing misunderstandings and conflict, it is also important that members receive feedback about their communications. Feedback is a way of checking that the meanings of the communicated messages are understood correctly. For feedback to be used appropriately it should (1) describe the content of the communication or the behavior as it is perceived by the group member, (2) be given to the member who sent the message as soon as the message is received, and (3) be expressed in a tentative manner so that those who send messages understand that the feedback is designed to check for distortions rather than to confront or attack them.

Examples of feedback are "John, I understood you to say . . . " or "Mary, if I understand you correctly, you are saying. . . ." Feedback and clarification can help to prevent communications from being interpreted in unintended ways. For an in-depth discussion about the effects of feedback on task group behavior, see Nadler (1979); for the effect of feedback on members of treatment groups, see Rhode and Stockton (1992).

Interaction Patterns

In addition to becoming aware of communication processes, the worker must also consider patterns of interaction that develop in a group.

Patterns of Group Interaction

- Maypole—when the leader is the central figure and communication occurs from the leader to the member and from the member to the leader
- Round robin—when members take turns talking
- Hot seat—when there is an extended back-and-forth between the leader and one member as the other members watch
- Free floating—when all members take responsibility for communicating, taking into consideration their ability to contribute meaningfully to the particular topic

The first three patterns are leader centered because the leader structures them. The fourth pattern is group centered because it emerges from the initiative of group members.

In most situations, workers should strive to facilitate the development of group-centered rather than leader-centered interaction patterns. In group-centered patterns, members freely interact with each other. Communication channels between members of the group are open. In leader-centered patterns, communications are directed from members to the worker or from the worker to group members, thereby reducing members' opportunities to communicate freely with each other.

Group-centered communication patterns tend to increase social interaction, group morale, members' commitment to group goals, and innovative decision making (Carletta, Garrod, & Fraser-Krauss, 1998). However, such patterns can be less efficient than leader-centered patterns because communication may be superfluous or extraneous to group tasks (Shaw, 1964). Sorting out useful communications can take a tremendous amount of group time. Therefore, in task groups that are making routine decisions, when time constraints are important and when there is little need for creative problem solving, the worker may deliberately choose to encourage leader-centered rather than group-centered interaction patterns.

To establish and maintain appropriate interaction patterns, the worker should be familiar with the factors that can change communication patterns, such as:

- Cues and the reinforcement that members receive for specific interactional exchanges
- The emotional bonds that develop between group members
- The subgroups that develop in the group

- The size and physical arrangements of the group
- The power and status relationships in the group

Workers can change interaction patterns by modifying these important factors.

CUES AND REINFORCERS. Cues such as words or gestures can act as signals to group members to talk more or less frequently to one another or to the worker. Workers and members can also use selective attention and other reinforcers to encourage beneficial interactions. For example, praise and other supportive comments, eye contact, and smiles tend to elicit more communication, whereas inattention tends to elicit less communication. So that all members may have a chance to participate fully in the life of a group, workers may want to reduce communication from particularly talkative members or encourage reserved members to talk more. Often, pointing out interaction patterns is all that is needed to change them. At other times, verbal and nonverbal cues may be needed. Sometimes, however, more active intervention is needed. For example, reserved members may benefit from group go-rounds where they are provided an opportunity to speak when it is their turn. Similarly, directing communication to others may help to reduce the amount of time dominant group members talk. When these strategies do not work, other strategies may be used with the permission of members. For example, to ensure that a dominant member does not monopolize all the group time, the worker may seek permission to interrupt any member who talks for more than two or three minutes and to redirect the communication to other members. This can be done with the understanding of "giving all members a chance to participate." The worker can say things like "Your thoughts are important, but other members need time to share their thoughts as well. If it is okay with you, I would like to find out who else has something they would like to talk about," or "That's a good thought . . . but you have been talking for a while. Can you hold that thought for later and let someone else have a turn to share their thoughts now?" When this is done consistently by the worker, it is often sufficient to reduce the dominance of a single member.

EMOTIONAL BONDS. Positive emotional bonds such as interpersonal liking and attraction increase interpersonal interaction, and negative emotional bonds reduce solidarity between members and result in decreased interpersonal interaction. Attraction and interpersonal liking between two members may occur because they share common interests, similar values and ideologies, complementary personality characteristics, or similar demographic characteristics (Hare et al., 1995).

Hartford (1971) calls alignments based on emotional bonds *interest alliances.* For example, two members of a planning council might vote the same way on certain issues and they may communicate similar thoughts and feelings to other members of the council on the basis of their common interests in the needs of the business community. Similarly, members of a minority group might form an interest alliance based on similar concerns about the lack of community services for minority groups.

SUBGROUPS. Subgroups also affect the interaction patterns in a group. Subgroups form from the emotional bonds and interest alliances among subsets of group members. They occur

naturally in all groups. They help make the group attractive to its members because individuals look forward to interacting with those to whom they are particularly close. The practitioner should not view subgroups as a threat to the integrity of the group unless the attraction of members within a subgroup becomes greater than their attraction to the group as a whole.

There are a variety of subgroup types, including the dyad, triad, and clique. Also, there are isolates, who do not interact with the group, and scapegoats, who receive negative attention and criticism from the group. More information about these roles, and other roles, is presented in Chapter 8.

In some situations the worker may actively encourage members to form subgroups, particularly in groups that are too large and cumbersome for detailed work to be accomplished. For example, subgroup formation is often useful in large task groups such as committees, delegate councils, and some teams. Members are assigned to a particular subgroup to work on a specific task or subtask. The results of the subgroup's work are then brought back to the larger group for consideration and action.

Regardless of whether the worker actively encourages members to form subgroups, they occur naturally because not everyone in a group interacts with equal valence. The formation of intense subgroup attraction, however, can be a problem. Subgroup members may challenge the worker's authority. They may substitute their own goals and methods of attaining them for the goals of the larger group. They can disrupt the group by communicating among themselves while others are speaking. Subgroup members may fail to listen to members who are not a part of the subgroup. Ultimately, intense and consistent subgroup formation can negatively affect the performance of the group as a whole (Gebhardt & Meyers, 1995).

When intense subgroup attraction appears to be interfering with the group as a whole, a number of steps can be taken.

Strategies for Addressing Intense Subgroup Attraction

- Examine whether the group as a whole is sufficiently attractive to members
- Promote the development of norms that emphasize the importance of members' listening to and respecting each other
- Promote the development of norms restricting communication to one member at a time
- Change seating arrangements
- Ask for certain members to interact more frequently with other members
- Use program materials and exercises that separate subgroup members
- Assign tasks for members to do outside of the group in subgroups composed of different members

If intense subgroup loyalties persist, it can be helpful to facilitate a discussion of the reasons for them and their effect on the group as a whole. A frank discussion of the reasons for subgroup formation can often benefit the entire group because it can reveal problems in the group's communication patterns and in its goal-setting and decision-making processes. After the discussion, the worker should try to increase the attraction of the group for its members and help them reach out to one another to reopen channels of communication.

In some cases, the worker may wish to use subgroups for therapeutic purposes. For example, Yalom (1995) suggests that the worker can use relationships between members to recapitulate the family group experience. Transference and countertransference reactions among members may be interpreted to help members gain insight into the impact of their early development on their current way of relating to others in the group and their broader social environment.

SIZE AND PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS. Other factors that influence interaction patterns are the size and physical arrangement of the group. As the size of the group increases, the possibilities for potential relationships increase dramatically. For example, with three people there are six potential combinations of relationships, but in a group with seven people there are 966 possible relationships (Kephart, 1951). Thus, as groups grow larger, each member has more social relationships to be aware of and to maintain, but less opportunity to maintain them.

With increased group size there are also fewer opportunities and less time for members to communicate. In some groups, the lack of opportunity to participate might not be much of a problem. It should not be assumed that members who are not actively participating are uninvolved in the group, although this may be true. Some group members welcome a chance for active involvement but speak only when they have an important contribution that might otherwise be overlooked. Often, however, a reduced chance to participate leads to dissatisfaction and a lack of commitment to decisions made by the group. Increased group size also tends to lead to subgroup formation as members strive to get to know those seated near them.

The physical arrangement of group members also influences interaction patterns. For example, members who sit in circles have an easier time communicating with each other than do members who sit in rows. Even members' positions within a circular pattern influence interaction patterns. Members who sit across from each other, for example, have an easier time communicating than do members on the same side of a circle who are separated by one or two members.

Because circular seating arrangements promote face-to-face interaction, they are often preferred to other arrangements. There may be times, however, when the group leader prefers a different arrangement. For example, the leader of a task group may wish to sit at the head of a rectangular table to convey his or her status or power. The leader may also wish to seat a particularly important member in close proximity. In an educational group, a leader may choose to stand before a group seated in rows, an arrangement that facilitates members' communications with the leader and tends to minimize interactions among members of the group.

Physical arrangements can also be used to help assess relationships among members and potential problems in group interaction. For example, members who are fond of each other often sit next to each other and as far away as possible from members they do not like. Similarly, members who pull chairs out from a circle, or sit behind other members, may be expressing their lack of investment in the group.

An interesting physical arrangement that often occurs in groups results from members' tendency to sit in the same seat from meeting to meeting. This physical arrangement persists because members feel secure in "their own" seat near familiar members. When seating

arrangements are modified by the leader, or by circumstance, communication patterns are often affected.

POWER AND STATUS. Two other factors affecting communication and interaction patterns are the relative power and status of the group members. Initially, members are accorded power and status on the basis of their position and prestige in the community, their physical attributes, and their position in the agency sponsoring the group. As a group develops, members' status and power change, depending on how important a member is in helping the group accomplish its tasks or in helping other members meet their socioemotional needs. When members carry out roles that are important to the group, their power and status increase. When a member enjoys high status and power, other members are likely to direct their communications to that member (Napier & Gershenfeld, 1993).

Principles for Practice

With basic information about the nature of communication and interaction patterns in groups, workers can intervene in any group to modify or change the patterns that develop. Workers may find the following principles about communication and interaction patterns helpful:

- Members of the group are always communicating. Workers should assess communication processes continually and help members communicate effectively throughout the life of a group.
- Communication patterns can be changed. Strategies for doing this start with identifying patterns during the group or at the end of group meetings during a brief time set aside to discuss group process. Workers then can reinforce desired interaction patterns; increase or decrease emotional bonds between members; change subgroups, group size, or group structure; or alter the power or status relationships in a group.
- Members communicate for a purpose. Workers should help members understand each other's intentions by clarifying them through group discussion.
- There is meaning in all communication. Workers should help members understand and appreciate the meaning of different communications.
- Messages are often perceived selectively. Workers should help members listen to what others are communicating.
- Messages may be distorted in transmission. Workers should help members clarify verbal and nonverbal communications that are unclear or ambiguous.
- Feedback and clarification enhances accurate understanding of communications. The worker should educate members about how to give and receive effective feedback and model these methods in the group.
- Open, group-centered communications are often, but not always, the preferred pattern of interaction. The worker should encourage communication patterns that are appropriate to the purpose of the group.

Workers who follow these principles can intervene to help groups develop patterns of communication and interaction that meet members' socioemotional needs while accomplishing group purposes.

Group Cohesion

Group cohesion is the result of all forces acting on members to remain in a group (Festinger, 1950). Festinger's (1950) "field of forces" concept of cohesion has been refined in recent years. Cohesion is a multifaceted concept that, depending on the context, can be viewed along many dimensions: (1) task and social cohesion, (2) vertical and horizontal cohesion, (3) personal and social attraction, (4) belongingness, and (5) morale (Dion, 2000). People are attracted to groups for a variety of reasons. According to Cartwright (1968), the following interacting sets of variables determine a member's attraction to a group.

Reasons for Members' Attraction to the Group

- The need for affiliation, recognition, and security
- The resources and prestige available through group participation
- Expectations of the beneficial and detrimental consequences of the group
- The comparison of the group with other group experiences

Cohesive groups satisfy members' need for affiliation. Some members have a need to socialize because their relationships outside the group are unsatisfactory or nonexistent. For example, Toseland, Decker, and Bliesner (1979) have shown that group work can be effective in meeting the needs of socially isolated older persons. Cohesive groups recognize members' accomplishments, and promote members' sense of competence. Members are attracted to the group when they feel that their participation is valued and when they feel they are well-liked. Groups are also more cohesive when they provide members with a sense of security. Schachter (1959), for example, has shown that fear and anxiety increase people's needs for affiliation. When group members have confidence in the group's ability to perform a specific task, it has also been found that the group is more cohesive and performs more effectively (Gibson, 1999; Pescosolido, 2001, 2003; Silver & Bufiano, 1996). Similarly, feelings of collective self-efficacy also have been shown to have an important impact on actual performance (Bandura, 1997a, 1997b).

The cohesion of a group can also be accounted for by incentives that are sometimes provided for group membership. Many people join groups because of the people they expect to meet and get to know. Opportunities for making new contacts and associating with high-status members are also incentives. In some groups, the tasks to be performed are enjoyable. Other groups might enable a member to accomplish tasks that require the help of others. Prestige may also be an incentive. For example, being nominated to a delegate council or other task group may enhance a member's prestige and status in an organization or the community. Another inducement to group membership may be access to services or resources not otherwise available.

Expectations of gratification and favorable comparisons with previous group experiences are two other factors that help make groups cohesive. For example, members with high expectations for a group experience and little hope of attaining similar satisfactions elsewhere will be attracted to a group. Thibaut and Kelley (1959) have found that members' continued attraction to a group depends on the "comparison level for alternatives"—that is, the satisfaction derived from the current group experience compared with that derived from other possible experiences.

Members' reasons for being attracted to a group affect how they perform in the group. For example, Back (1951) found that members who were attracted to a group primarily because they perceived other members as similar or as potential friends related on a personal level in the group and more frequently engaged in conversations not focused on the group's task. Members attracted by the group's task wanted to complete it quickly and efficiently and maintained task-relevant conversations. Members attracted by the prestige of group membership were cautious not to risk their status in the group. They initiated few controversial topics and focused on their own actions rather than on those of other group members.

Cohesion can affect the functioning of individual members and the group as a whole in many ways. Research and clinical observations have documented that cohesion tends to increase many beneficial dynamics.

Effects of Cohesion

- Expression of positive and negative feelings (Pepitone & Reichling, 1955; Yalom, 1995)
- Willingness to listen (Yalom, 1995)
- Effective use of other members' feedback and evaluations (Yalom, 1995)
- Members' influence over each other (Cartwright, 1968)
- Feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem, and personal adjustment (Seashore, 1954; Yalom, 1995)
- Satisfaction with the group experience (Widmeyer & Williams, 1991)
- Perseverance toward goals (Cartwright, 1968; Spink & Carron, 1994)
- Willingness to take responsibility for group functioning (Dion, Miller, & Magnan, 1970)
- Goal attainment, individual and group performance, and organizational commitment (Evans & Dion, 1991; Gully, Devine, & Whitney, 1995; Mullen & Cooper, 1994; Wech, Mossholder, Steel, & Bennett, 1998)
- Attendance, membership maintenance, and length of participation (Prapavessis & Carron, 1997)

Although cohesion can have many beneficial effects, workers should be aware that cohesion operates in complex interaction with other group properties. For example, although cohesive groups tend to perform better than less cohesive groups, the quality of decisions made by cohesive groups is moderated by the nature of the task (Gully et al., 1995) and by the size of the group (Mullen & Cooper, 1994). Cohesion has more influence on outcomes, for

example, when task interdependence is high rather than when it is low (Gully et al.). Cohesion also varies over the course of a group's development. For example, Budman, Soldz, Demby, Davis, and Merry (1993) have shown that what is viewed as cohesive behavior early in the life of a group may not be viewed that way later in the group's development.

It also should be pointed out that cohesion can have some negative effects on the functioning of a group. Cohesion is a necessary, albeit not sufficient, ingredient in the development of "group think." According to Janis (1972) *group think* is "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive ingroup, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action" (p. 9). In analyzing how group think develops, Janis (1972, 1982) emphasized cohesion more than authoritarian leadership, methodical search and appraisal procedures, or other qualities of a group.

In addition to encouraging pathological conformity, cohesion can lead to dependence on the group. This can be a particularly vexing problem in intensive therapy groups with members who started the group experience with severe problems and poor self-images. Thus, while promoting the development of cohesion in groups, the worker should ensure that members' individuality is not sacrificed. Members should be encouraged to express divergent opinions and to respect divergent opinions expressed by other group members. It is also important to adequately prepare members for group termination and independent functioning. Methods for this preparation are discussed in Chapter 14.

Principles for Practice

Because cohesion has many benefits, workers should strive to make groups attractive to members. Workers may find the following principles helpful when trying to enhance a group's cohesiveness:

- A high level of open interaction promotes cohesiveness. The worker should use group discussions and program activities to encourage interaction among members.
- When members' needs are met, they want to continue participating. Therefore, the worker should help members identify their needs and how they can be met in the group.
- Achieving group goals makes the group more attractive to its members. The worker should help members focus on and achieve goals.
- Noncompetitive intragroup relationships that affirm members' perceptions and points of view increase group cohesion. The worker should help group members to cooperate rather than compete with each other.
- Competitive intergroup relationships help to define a group's identity and purpose, thereby heightening members' cohesion. The worker can use naturally occurring intergroup competition to build intragroup bonds.
- A group that is too large can decrease members' attraction to the group by obstructing their full participation. The worker should compose a group that gives all members the opportunity to be fully involved.

- When members' expectations are understood and addressed, members feel as if they are part of the group. The worker should help members clarify their expectations, and should strive for congruence between members' expectations and the purposes of the group.
- Groups that offer rewards, resources, status, or prestige that members would not obtain by themselves tend to be attractive. Therefore, workers should help groups to be rewarding experiences for members.
- Pride in being a member of a group can increase cohesion. The worker should help the group develop pride in its identity and purpose.

If the costs of participation in a group exceed the benefits, members may stop attending (Thibaut & Kelley, 1954). Although workers cannot ensure that all factors are present in every group, they should strive to make sure that the group is as attractive as possible to each member who participates.

Social Integration and Influence

Social integration refers to how members fit together and are accepted in a group. Groups are not able to function effectively unless there is a fairly high level of social integration among members. Social order and stability are prerequisites for the formation and maintenance of a cohesive group. Social integration builds unanimity about the purposes and goals of the group, helping members to move forward in an orderly and efficient manner to accomplish work and achieve goals.

Norms, roles, and status hierarchies promote social integration by influencing how members behave in relationship to each other and by delineating members' places within the group. They lend order and familiarity to group processes, helping to make members' individual behaviors predictable and comfortable for all. Norms, roles, and status dynamics help groups to avoid unpredictability and excessive conflict that, in turn, could lead to chaos and the disintegration of the group. Too much conformity and compliance resulting from overly rigid and restrictive norms, roles, and status hierarchies can lead to the suppression of individual members' initiative, creativity, and intellectual contributions. At the same time, a certain amount of predictability, conformity, and compliance is necessary to enable members to work together to achieve group goals. Therefore, it is important for workers to guide the development of norms, roles, and status hierarchies that achieve a balance between too little and too much conformity.

The extent of social integration and influence varies from group to group. In groups with strong social influences, members give up a great deal of their freedom and individuality. In some groups this is necessary for effective functioning. For example, in a delegate council in which members are representing the views of their organization, there is generally little room for individual preferences and viewpoints. Norms and roles clearly spell out how individual delegates should behave. In other groups, however, members may have a great deal of freedom within a broad range of acceptable behavior. The following sections describe how the worker can achieve a balance so that norms, roles, and status hierarchies

can satisfy members' socioemotional needs while simultaneously promoting effective and efficient group functioning.

Norms

Norms are shared expectations and beliefs about appropriate ways to act in a social situation such as a group. They refer to specific member behaviors and to the overall pattern of behavior that is acceptable in a group. Norms stabilize and regulate behavior in groups. By providing guidelines for acceptable and appropriate behavior, norms increase predictability, stability, and security for members and help to encourage organized and coordinated action to reach goals.

Norms result from what is valued, preferred, and accepted behavior in the group. The preferences of certain high-status members might be given greater consideration in the development of group norms than the preferences of low-status members, but all members share to some extent in the development of group norms.

Norms develop as the group develops. Norms develop directly as members observe one another's behavior in the group and vicariously as members express their views and opinions during the course of group interaction. As members express preferences, share views, and behave in certain ways, norms become clarified. Soon it becomes clear that sanctions and social disapproval result from some behaviors and that praise and social approval result from other behaviors. Structure in early group meetings is associated with increased cohesion, reduced conflict, and higher member satisfaction (Stockton, Rohde, & Haughey, 1992). The emergence of norms as the group progresses, however, reduces the need for structure and control by the worker.

Because norms are developed through the interactions of group members, they discourage the capricious use of power by the leader or by any one group member. They also reduce the need for excessive controls to be imposed on the group from external forces.

Norms vary in important ways. Norms may be overt and explicit or covert and implicit. Overt norms are those that can be clearly articulated by the leader and the members. In contrast, covert norms exert important influences on the way members behave and interact without ever being talked about or discussed. For example, a group leader who states that the group will begin and end on time, and then follows through on that "rule" each week, has articulated an explicit group norm in an overt fashion. In contrast, a covert, implicit norm might be for members of a couples group to avoid any talk of intimate behavior or infidelity. The implicit norm is that these topics are not discussed in this group.

Norms vary according to the extent that people consider them binding. Some norms are strictly enforced whereas others are rarely enforced. Some norms are more elastic than others; that is, some permit a great deal of leeway in behavior, but others prescribe narrow and specific behaviors.

Norms also have various degrees of saliency for group members. For some members, a particular norm may exert great influence, but for others it may exert little influence.

Deviations from group norms are not necessarily harmful to a group. Deviations can often help groups move in new directions or challenge old ways of accomplishing tasks that are no longer functional. Norms may be dysfunctional or unethical, and it may be beneficial for

members to deviate from them. For example, in a treatment group, norms develop that make it difficult for members to express intense emotions. Members who deviate from this norm help the group reexamine its norms and enable members to deepen their level of communication. The worker should try to understand the meaning of deviations from group norms and the implications for group functioning. It can also be helpful to point out covert norms and to help groups examine whether these contribute to the effective functioning of the group.

Because they are so pervasive and powerful, norms are somewhat more difficult to change than role expectations or status hierarchies. Therefore, a worker should strive to ensure that the developing norms are beneficial for the group. Recognizing the difficulty of changing norms, Lewin (1947) suggested that three stages are necessary for changing the equilibrium and the status quo that hold norms constant. There must first be disequilibrium or unfreezing caused by a crisis or other tension-producing situation. During this period, group members reexamine the current group norms. Sometimes a crisis may be induced by the worker through a discussion or demonstration of how current norms will affect the group in the future. In other cases, dysfunctional norms lead to a crisis.

In the second stage, members return to equilibrium with new norms replacing previous ones. According to Lewin, the second stage is called *freezing.* In the third stage, called *refreezing,* the new equilibrium is stabilized. New norms become the recognized and accepted rules by which the group functions. Napier and Gershenfeld (1993) have suggested ways that norms can be changed.

Changing Norms

- Discussing, diagnosing, and making explicit decisions about group norms
- Directly intervening in the group to change a norm
- Deviating from a norm and helping a group to adapt a new response
- Helping the group become aware of external influences and their effect on the group's norms
- Hiring a consultant to work with the group to change its norms

Roles

Like norms, roles can also be an important influence on group members. Roles are closely related to norms. Whereas norms are shared expectations held, to some extent, by everyone in the group, *roles* are shared expectations about the functions of individuals in the group. Unlike norms, which define behavior in a wide range of situations, roles define behavior in relation to a specific function or task that the group member is expected to perform. Roles continue to emerge and evolve as the work of the group changes over time (Salazar, 1996).

Roles are important for groups because they allow for division of labor and appropriate use of power. They ensure that someone will be designated to take care of vital group functions. Roles provide social control in groups by prescribing how members should behave in certain situations. Performing in a certain role not only prescribes certain behavior but also limits members' freedom to deviate from the expected behavior of someone who

performs that role. For example, it would be viewed as inappropriate for an educational group leader to express feelings and emotional reactions about a personal issue that was not relevant to the topic.

Changes or modifications of roles are best undertaken by discussing members' roles, clarifying the responsibilities and the privileges of existing roles, asking members to assume new roles, or adding new roles according to preferences expressed during the group's discussion.

Status

Along with norms and role expectations, social controls are also exerted through members' status in a group. *Status* refers to an evaluation and ranking of each member's position in the group relative to all other members. A person's status within a group is partially determined by his or her prestige, position, and recognized expertise outside the group. To some extent, however, status is also dependent on the situation. In one group, status may be determined by a member's position in the agency sponsoring the group. In another group, status may be determined by how well a member is liked by other group members, how much the group relies on the member's expertise or how much responsibility the member has in the group. It is also determined by how a person acts once he or she becomes a member of a group. Because status is defined relative to other group members, a person's status in a group is also affected by the other members who comprise the group.

Status serves a social integration function in a rather complex manner. Low-status members are the least likely to conform to group norms because they have little to lose by deviating. For this reason, low-status members have the potential to be disruptive of productive group processes. Disruptive behavior is less likely if low-status members have hopes of gaining a higher status. Medium-status group members tend to conform to group norms so that they can retain their status and perhaps gain a higher status. Therefore, workers should provide opportunities for low-status members to contribute to the group so that they can become more socially integrated and achieve a higher status. High-status members perform many valued services for the group and generally conform to valued group norms when they are establishing their position. However, because of their position, high-status members have more freedom to deviate from accepted norms. They are often expected to do something special and creative when the group is in a crisis situation (Nixon, 1979). If medium- or low-status members consistently deviate from group norms, they are threatened with severe sanctions or forced to leave the group. If high-status members consistently deviate from group norms, their status in the group is diminished, but they are rarely threatened with severe sanctions or forced to leave the group.

Status hierarchies are most easily changed by the addition or removal of group members. If this is not possible, group discussion may help members express their opinions and feelings about the effects of the current status hierarchy and how to modify it. Changing members' roles in the group and helping them to achieve a more visible or responsible position within the group can also increase members' status.

Overall, norms, roles, and status are important components of the social influence groups have on members. Pioneering studies by Sherif (1936), Newcomb (1943), Asch (1952, 1955, 1957), and Milgram (1974) clearly demonstrated the power influence that

the group has on the individual. It has also been shown, however, that individual group members with minority opinions can influence the majority (Moscovici, 1985, 1994; Moscovici & Lage, 1976; Moscovici, Lage, & Naffrechoux, 1969). Some methods that members with minority opinions can use to get their opinions heard and paid attention to follow.

Expressing and Getting Minority Opinions Adopted by the Majority

- Offer compelling and consistent arguments
- Ask the group to carefully listen to and consider your thoughts
- Appear confident
- Do not rigidly cling to a viewpoint or be close-minded about other points of view
- Take a flexible stand, consider compromise
- Use uncertainties and flawed logic in the majority's opinions to inform your own approach

Principles for Practice

Norms, roles, and status are interrelated concepts that affect the social integration of individuals in the group. They limit individuality, freedom, and independence, but at the same time stabilize and regulate the operation of the group, helping members to feel comfortable and secure in their positions within the group and with each other. Therefore, in working with task and treatment groups, workers should balance the needs of individuals and of the group as a whole, managing conformity and deviation, while ensuring that norms, roles, and status hierarchies are working to benefit rather than hinder or limit individual members and the whole group. Workers may find the following principles about these dynamics helpful when facilitating a group:

- The worker should help group members to assess the extent to which norms, roles, and status hierarchies are helping members feel socially integrated while helping the group to accomplish its goals.
- The worker should facilitate norms, roles, and status hierarchies that give the group sufficient structure so that interaction does not become disorganized, chaotic, unsafe, or unduly anxiety producing.
- The worker should avoid facilitating norms, roles, and status hierarchies that restrict members' ability to exercise their own judgment and free will, and to accomplish agreed-on goals. The worker should ensure that there is freedom and independence within the range of acceptable behaviors agreed on by the group.
- Members choose to adhere to norms, roles, and status hierarchies in groups that are attractive and cohesive. Workers should help make the group a satisfying experience for members.
- Members choose to adhere to norms, roles, and status hierarchies when they consider the group's goals important and meaningful. Therefore, workers should emphasize

the importance of the group's work and the meaningfulness of each member's contributions.

- Members choose to adhere to norms, roles, and status hierarchies when they desire continued membership because of their own needs or because of pressure from sources within or outside the group. Therefore, workers should consider the incentives for members to participate in a group.
- Rewards and sanctions can help members adhere to norms, roles, and status expectations. Workers should assess whether rewards and sanctions are applied fairly and equitably to promote healthy social integration that benefits each member and the group as a whole.

By following these principles, workers can ensure that the norms, role expectations, and status hierarchy that develop in a group satisfy members' needs while helping to accomplish individual and group goals.

Group Culture

Although it has often been overlooked in discussions of group dynamics, group culture is an important force in the group as a whole. *Group culture* refers to values, beliefs, customs, and traditions held in common by group members (Olmsted, 1959). According to Levi (2001), culture can be viewed as having three levels. At the surface, symbols and rituals display the culture of the group. For example, in Alcoholics Anonymous groups, members usually begin an interaction by saying their first name and by stating that they are an alcoholic. At a deeper level, culture is displayed in the way members interact with one another. For example, the way conflict is handled in a group says much about its culture. The deepest level of culture includes the core beliefs, ideologies, and values held in common by members.

Multicultural differences within the group can have an important impact on the development of group culture and the social integration of all members. For example, individualism, competitiveness, and achievement are more valued in American and European cultures than are humility and modesty, which are more prevalent in some non-Western cultures. Similarly, experiences of group survival, social hierarchy, inclusiveness, and ethnic identification can powerfully influence the beliefs, ideologies, and values that are held by racially and ethnically diverse members, but these same experiences may have little salience for members of majority groups who have long been acculturated to dominant societal values (Hopps & Pinderhughes, 1999; Matsukawa, 2001). Insensitivity to these values, however, can isolate and alienate minority members and reduce their opportunity for social integration within the group.

When the membership of a group is diverse, group culture emerges slowly. Members contribute unique sets of values that originate from their past experiences as well as from their ethnic, cultural, and racial heritages. These values are blended through group communications and interactions. In early meetings, members explore each other's unique value systems and attempt to find a common ground on which they can relate to each other. By later meetings, members have had a chance to share and understand each other's value systems.

As a result, a common set of values develops, which becomes the group's culture. The group's culture continues to evolve throughout the life of the group.

Group culture emerges more quickly in groups with a homogeneous membership. When members share common life experiences and similar sets of values, their unique perspectives blend more quickly into a group culture. For example, members of groups sponsored by culturally based organizations, such as the Urban League or Centro Civico, and groups that represent a particular point of view, such as the National Organization for Women (NOW), are more likely to share similar life experiences and similar values than are groups with more diverse memberships. One of the attractions of these homogeneous groups is that they provide an affirming and supportive atmosphere.

Culture is also influenced by the environment in which a group functions. As part of the organizational structure of an agency, a community, and a society, groups share the values, traditions, and heritage of these larger social systems. The extent to which these systems influence the group depends on the degree of interaction the group has with them. For example, on one end of the continuum, an administrative team's operational procedures are often greatly influenced by agency policies and practices. On the other end, gangs tend to isolate themselves from the dominant values of society, the community, and local youth organizations. Group workers can learn a great deal about groups by examining how they interact with their environment.

Groups that address community needs often have much interaction with their environment. When analyzing a change opportunity, building a constituency, or deciding how to implement an action plan, groups that set out to address community needs must carefully consider dominant community values and traditions. The receptivity of powerful individuals within a community will be determined to some extent by how consistent a group's actions are with the values and traditions they hold in high regard. Whenever possible, groups attempting to address community needs should frame their efforts within the context of dominant community values. The practitioner can help by attempting to find the common ground in the values of the community and the group. When a group's actions are perceived to be in conflict with dominant community values, it is unlikely to receive the support of influential community leaders. In these situations, the group may rely on conflict strategies (described in Chapters 9 and 11), to achieve its objectives.

Once a culture has developed, members who endorse and share in the culture feel secure and at home, whereas those who do not are likely to feel isolated or even alienated. For isolated members the group is often not a satisfying experience. It is demoralizing and depressing to feel misunderstood and left out. Feelings of oppression can be exacerbated. Those who do not feel comfortable with the culture that has developed are more likely to drop out of the group or become disruptive. More extreme feelings of alienation can lead to rebellious, acting-out behavior. Subgroups that feel alienated from the dominant group culture may rebel in various ways against the norms, roles, and status hierarchies that have developed in the group. This can be avoided by providing individual attention to isolated members, and by stimulating all members to incorporate beliefs, ideologies, and values that celebrate difference and transcend individual differences. The worker can also help by fostering the full participation and integration of all group members into the life of the group.

Principles for Practice

The culture that a group develops has a powerful influence on its ability to achieve its goals while satisfying members' socioemotional needs. A culture that emphasizes values of self-determination, openness, fairness, and diversity of opinion can do much to facilitate the achievement of group and individual goals. Sometimes members bring ethnic, cultural, or social stereotypes to the group and thus inhibit the group's development and effective functioning. Through interaction and discussion, workers can help members confront stereotypes and learn to understand and appreciate persons who bring different values and cultural and ethnic heritages to the group.

In helping the group build a positive culture, the worker should consider the following principles:

- Group culture emerges from the mix of values that members bring to the group. The worker should help members examine, compare, and respect each other's value systems.
- Group culture is also affected by the values of the agency, the community, and the society that sponsor and sanction the group. The worker should help members identify and understand these values.
- Group members and workers can hold stereotypes that interfere with their ability to interact with each other. Workers should help members eliminate stereotypical ways of relating to each other and develop an awareness of their own stereotypes.
- Value conflicts can reduce group cohesion and, in extreme cases, lead to the demise of the group. The worker should mediate value conflicts among members and between members and the larger society.
- Group culture can exert a powerful influence on members' values. The worker should model values such as openness, self-determination, fairness, and acceptance of difference, which are fundamental to social group work and the social work profession.
- Groups are most satisfying when they meet members' socioemotional and instrumental needs. Therefore, the worker should balance members' needs for emotional expressiveness with their needs to accomplish specific goals.

STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

According to Northen (1969), "a stage is a differentiable period or a discernible degree in the process of growth and development" (p. 49). The rest of this text is organized around the skills that workers can use during each stage of a group's development. A group's entire social structure, its communication and interaction patterns, cohesion, social controls, and culture evolve as it develops. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of group development is essential for the effective practice of group work. This section reviews

some of the ways that group development has been conceptualized by other group work theoreticians.

Many attempts have been made to classify stages of group development. Table 3.3 lists some of the models of group development that have appeared in the literature. Most are based on descriptions of groups that the authors of each model have worked with or observed. Most models propose that all groups pass through similar stages of development. As can be seen in Table 3.3, however, different writers have different ideas about the number and types of stages through which all groups pass. For example, Bales' (1950) model of group development has only three stages, but the model presented by Sarri and Galinsky (1985) has seven stages.

Relatively few empirical studies have been conducted of particular models, and little empirical evidence exists to support the notion that any one model accurately describes the stages through which all groups pass. The studies that have been conducted suggest that groups move through stages, but that the stages are not constant across different groups (Shaw, 1976; Smith, 1978). MacKenzie (1994), Wheelan (1994), and Worchell (1994) point out that both progressive and cyclical processes exist in groups; that is, although groups often move through stages of development from beginning to end, they also often come back to readdress certain basic process issues in a cyclical or oscillating fashion. For example, there is often a cyclical movement of group members from feeling (1) invested in the task to emotionally displaced from the task, (2) part of the group to autonomous, (3) defended to open, and (4) isolated to enmeshed.

There is some evidence that stages of group development may be affected by the needs of group members, the type of group, the goals of the group, the setting in which the group meets, and the orientation of the leader (Shaw, 1976; Smith, 1978). For example, a study of open-membership groups (Schopler & Galinsky, 1990) revealed that few moved beyond a beginning stage of development. *Open-membership* groups that are able to move beyond a beginning level of development are those that have a membership change less frequently than every other meeting and those with less than a 50 percent change in membership (Galinsky & Schopler, 1989).

Groups with frequent and extensive membership changes almost always remain at a formative stage. Such groups cope with problems in continuity and development by following highly ritualistic and structured procedures for group meetings. For example, a group in a stroke rehabilitation unit in a large teaching hospital in which a patient's typical stay is three to four weeks might be structured to begin with a half-hour educational presentation, followed by a half-hour discussion. The group would meet three times a week. Eight different topics could be presented before they are repeated. Therefore, patients with typical hospital stay of three to four weeks could learn about all eight topics, yet begin and end their participation at any time. However, the intimacy that can be achieved during the middle stage of groups with closed memberships is rarely achieved in groups in which members are continually entering and leaving the group.

Despite the variable nature of the stages of group development described by different writers, many of the models contain similar stages. As can be seen in Table 3.3, the various phases of group development can be divided into three stages: beginning, middle, and end. Each model of group development is placed in relationship to these three broad stages.

TABLE 3.3 ● *Stages of Group Development*

Development Stage	Beginning	Middle	End
Bales (1950)	Orientation	Evaluation	Decision making
Tuckman (1963)	Forming	Storming Norming Performing	Termination
Northen (1969)	Planning and Orientation	Exploring and testing Problem solving	Pretermination
Hartford (1971)	Pregroup planning Convening Group formation	Disintegration and conflict Group function and maintenance	Termination
Klein (1972)	Orientation Resistance	Negotiation Intimacy	Termination
Trecker (1972)	Beginning Emergence of some group feeling	Development of bond, purpose, and cohesion Strong group feeling Decline in group feeling	Ending
Sarri & Galinsky (1985)	Origin phase Formative phase	Intermediate phase 1 Revision phase Intermediate phase II Maturation phase	Termination
Garland, Jones, & Kolodny (1976)	Preaffiliation Power and control	Intimacy Differentiation	Separation
Henry (1992)	Initiating Convening	Conflict Maintenance	Termination
Wheelan (1994)	Dependency and delusion	Counterdependency and flight Trust and structure Work	Termination
Schiller (1995)	Preaffiliation	Establishing a relational base Mutuality and interpersonal empathy Mutuality and change	Separation

Most writers suggest that the beginning stages of groups are concerned with planning, organizing, and convening. The beginnings of groups are characterized by an emergence of group feeling. Group feeling, however, often does not emerge without a struggle. For example, Klein (1972) emphasizes the resistance of members to group pressure; Garland, Jones, and Kolodny (1976) emphasize the desire of group members to become a part of the group while maintaining their autonomy. Thus, along with the tendency to approach one another,

there is also a tendency for members to maintain their distance. Garland, Jones, and Kolodny (1976) identified this tendency as an approach-avoidance conflict. As the beginning stage progresses and norms and roles are differentiated, members explore and test the roles they are beginning to assume in the group. Conflict may emerge. The leader can help by encouraging members to discuss and resolve conflicts as they emerge during the group process. It is also helpful to point out that encountering conflict and dealing with it are normal steps in the development of smooth-working relationships in preparation for the intense work to come in the middle stage. More information about conflict among members and how to resolve it is provided in Chapters 4, 7, and 11.

Although some work is accomplished in all stages of a group's development, most occurs in the middle stage. At the beginning of this stage, the conflicts over norms, roles, and other group dynamics found in the later part of the beginning stage give way to established patterns of interaction. A deepening of interpersonal relationships and greater group cohesion begin to appear. After this occurs, groups concern themselves with the work necessary to accomplish the specific tasks and goals that have been agreed on. The terms used to describe this stage include *problem solving, performing, maintenance, intimacy, work,* and *maturity.* Task accomplishment is preceded by a differentiation of roles and accompanied by the development of feedback and evaluation mechanisms.

The ending stage of a group is characterized by the completion and evaluation of the group's efforts. Bales' (1950) model of group development suggests that during this stage, task groups make decisions, finish their business, and produce the results of their efforts. Treatment groups, which have emphasized socioemotional functioning as well as task accomplishment, begin a process of separation, during which group feeling and cohesion decline. Often members mark termination by summarizing the accomplishments of the group and celebrating together.

Models of group development provide a framework to describe worker roles and appropriate interventions during each stage of a group. They also help workers organize and systematize strategies of intervention. For example, in the beginning stage, a worker's interventions are directed at helping the group define its purpose and helping members feel comfortable with one another. Models of group development can also prepare the leader for what to expect from different types of groups during each stage of development. For example models such as the one by Schiller (1995), shown in Table 3.3, help the worker to focus on the development of dynamics in women's groups.

The usefulness of theories of group development for group work practice, however, is limited by the uniqueness of each group experience. The developmental stages of groups vary significantly across the broad range of task and treatment groups that a worker might lead. It should not be assumed that all groups follow the same pattern of development or that an intervention that is effective in one group will automatically be effective in another group that is in the same developmental stage. Nevertheless, organizing content into specific developmental stages is a useful heuristic device when teaching students and practitioners how to lead and be effective members of treatment and task groups.

The model of group development presented in this text includes four broad stages: (1) planning, (2) beginning, (3) middle, and (4) ending. The beginning stage includes separate chapters on beginning groups and assessment. The middle stage includes four chap-

ters focused on generic and specialized skills for leading task and treatment groups. The ending stage includes chapters on evaluating the work of the group and on terminating with individual members and the group as a whole. The rest of this text is organized around the skills, procedures, and techniques that help groups function effectively during each stage.

Principles for Practice

The worker should be knowledgeable about the theoretical constructs that have been proposed about the stages of group development. Knowing what is normative behavior for members at each stage can help the worker to assess whether the group is making progress toward achieving its goals. It can also help workers to identify dysfunctional behavior in an individual group member and problems that are the responsibility of the group as a whole. The following practice principles are derived from an understanding of group development:

- Closed-membership groups develop in discernible and predictable stages. The worker should use systematic methods of observing and assessing the development of the group and should teach group members about the predictable stages of group development.
- The development of open-membership groups depends on member turnover. The worker should help open-membership groups develop a simple structure and a clear culture to help new members integrate rapidly into the group.
- Groups generally begin with members exploring the purpose of the group and the roles of the worker and each member. The worker should provide a safe and positive group environment so that members can fully explore the group's purpose and the resources available to accomplish the group's goals.
- After the initial stage of development, groups often experience a period of norm development, role testing, and status awareness that results in expressions of difference among members and the leader. The worker should help members understand that these expressions of difference are a normal part of group development.
- Structure has been demonstrated to increase member satisfaction, increase feelings of safety, and reduce conflict in early group meetings. A lack of structure can lead to feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and can lead to acting out and projection. Therefore, the worker should provide sufficient structure for group interaction, particularly in early group meetings.
- Tension or conflict sometimes develops from differences among members. The worker should help the group resolve the conflict by helping the group develop norms emphasizing the importance of respect and tolerance and by mediating the differences and finding a common ground for productive work together.
- Groups enter a middle stage characterized by increased group cohesion and a focus on task accomplishment. To encourage movement toward this stage, the worker should help members stay focused on the purpose of the group, challenge members to

develop an appropriate culture for work, and help the group overcome obstacles to goal achievement.

- In the ending stage, the group finishes its work. The worker should help members review and evaluate their work together by highlighting accomplishments and pointing out areas that need further work.

- Groups sometimes experience strong feelings about endings. The worker should help members recognize these feelings, review what they accomplished in the group, and help members plan for termination.

SUMMARY

Groups are social systems made up of people in interaction. This chapter describes some of the most important forces that result from the interaction of group members. In working with task and treatment groups, it is essential to understand group dynamics and be able to use them to accomplish group goals. Without a thorough understanding of group dynamics, workers will not be able to help members satisfy their needs or help the group accomplish its tasks.

Group workers should be familiar with four dimensions of group dynamics: (1) communication and interaction patterns; (2) the cohesion of the group and its attraction for its members; (3) social controls such as norms, roles, and status; and (4) the group's culture. Communication and interaction patterns are basic to the formation of all groups. Through communication and interaction, properties of the group as a whole develop, and the work of the group is accomplished. This chapter presents a model of the communication process.

Groups are maintained because of the attraction they hold for their members. Members join groups for many reasons. The extent to which the group meets members' needs and expectations determines the attraction of the group for its members and the extent to which a group becomes a cohesive unit. As cohesion develops, group structures are elaborated and norms, roles, and status hierarchies form. Norms, roles, and status hierarchies are social controls that help to form and shape shared expectations about appropriate behavior in the group. Conformity to expected behavior patterns results in rewards, and deviation results in sanctions. Social controls help to maintain a group's equilibrium as it confronts internal and external pressure to change during its development. However, social controls can be harmful if they are too rigid, too stringent, or if they foster behavior that is contrary to the value base of the social work profession.

As the group evolves, it develops a culture derived from the environment in which it functions as well as from the beliefs, customs, and values of its members. The culture of a group has a pervasive effect on its functioning. For example, a group's culture affects the objectives of the group, which task the group decides to work on, how members interact, and which methods the group uses to conduct its business.

Although properties of groups are often discussed as if they were static, they change constantly throughout the life of a group. Many writers have attempted to describe typical

stages through which all groups pass. Although no single model of group development is universally accepted, some of the major characteristics that distinguish group process during each stage of group development are discussed in this chapter. These characteristics can be a useful guide for group practitioners in the beginning, middle, and ending stages of group work, which are described in later portions of this text.

This chapter points out the power of group dynamics in influencing group members and in contributing to or detracting from the success of a group. As workers become familiar with properties of groups as a whole, their appreciation of the effects that natural and formed groups have on the lives of their clients is enhanced. In addition, workers can use their understanding of group dynamics to enhance their ability to work effectively with both task and treatment groups.