

HIGHLIGHT 3.4 (continued)

Now she wanted to get their feedback on her work as their supervisor.

After much discussion, unit members decided to rate Mary on five different characteristics they considered important in a supervisor. When they were done, they decided to present Mary with a composite picture of how the unit felt about her leadership. Rather than give her their individual ratings, the unit members decided to average their individual ratings on each of the five characteristics and give her one set of ratings. This method eliminated extremes at both ends (e.g., very high or very low ratings) and gave a more middle-of-the-road view of her performance.

Persuasion by a Minority of the Group

The night was getting quite late as the Franklin Avenue Neighborhood Association neared the end of its agenda. The last item to discuss was what to do about the vacant house at the end of the block. The property had been

abandoned by its owner and was attracting children and local teenagers who sought access through its broken windows and back door. Since the house was really on the edge of the neighborhood, many members did not see it as a matter of great concern. There was even a question of whether the property was part of Franklin Avenue, since it faced a side street.

Quietly, but firmly, Mr. Alison and Mrs. Gonzales spoke of the dangers to the neighborhood children and the way the property detracted from the quality of the neighborhood. Ms. Washington, usually rather quiet, then spoke passionately about how this house was a danger to her small children. She angrily asked how the other members would feel if the house was next door to their homes. She demanded that the group take a position and ask the city to have the house torn down or renovated. The group decided to follow her recommendation, less out of commitment and more because of her ardent and outspoken position on a matter of relatively less concern to them.

to reach a solution that most, if not all, members can support. In some cases, the compromise pleases no one entirely but is viewed as the best that can be done under the circumstances. Each side gives up something to reach an agreement with the other side. Groups that begin with an idea, amend it repeatedly to satisfy divergent points of view, and then approve the final product usually are making decisions by compromise. The degree of satisfaction with the compromise is often lower compared to decisions reached by consensus.

Decision Making by Majority

Most deliberative bodies (e.g., legislatures, boards of directors) engage in **decision making by majority rule**. In this model, a decision occurs when over one-half of the decision makers support (or vote for) an idea. Decisions made in this fashion typically are accepted by the winning side and disliked by the losing side. Losers do not necessarily feel as compelled to support the outcome of the group decision making as is true with consensus. Because majority rule is a less time-consuming method, large groups often use it. When a matter is of little consequence, majority rule may be a satisfactory method for making a decision. When the matter is complex or requires a high level of commitment from the group to the decision, this method is problematic. Losers may not support the decision and

may passively undercut the proposal. In some cases, losers may be resentful and actively work to make the idea fail. Alternate methods of arriving at majority rule involve increasing the percent of votes required for passage (revisions of bylaws or constitutions of organizations frequently require a two-thirds majority) or developing a weighted system of voting. While these methods help increase the percent of members who support a decision, they do not truly overcome the disadvantages of this style of decision making.

One example of decision making by majority is the passage of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) by the U.S. Congress. The final passage in both the House and Senate occurred without a single member of the Republican Party voting in favor of the bill. The Democratic Party had a sufficient majority to approve the bill without minority (Republican) votes. At the same time, many of the changes or amendments to the bill were suggested and supported by Republican members of the House and Senate while the bill was being debated.

Rule by an Individual

Many groups make decisions by default and allow one individual to make choices that affect the entire group. This situation may occur because of the forcefulness of the speaker, members' fear of offending the decision maker, disinterest in the decision itself, or lack of

assertiveness. Essentially, one member makes a decision, and the rest of the group acquiesces. Sometimes, there is discussion among the members about the options; at other times, there is none.

Persuasion by a Recognized Expert

Many groups have members with expertise in a certain area. For example, one member of an educational group may have had experience placing a loved one in a nursing home. Other group members typically listen to members who are perceived to be knowledgeable about a given subject. When a group comes to making a decision, it may accede to the recommendations of the "expert."

Averaging of the Opinions of Individual Group Members

In some groups, decisions are made by averaging the opinions of individual group members. This process is done most easily when the opinions are really able to be averaged. That is, the opinions may be in the form of numerical ratings that can be averaged using standard mathematical techniques. Unlike a compromise, there is really no giving in by individual members but rather an acceptance that one's opinion will be merged with those of the rest of the group. This technique has the advantage of not requiring people to give up their opinion or change it in response to group pressure.

Persuasion by a Minority of the Group

Persuasion by a minority often occurs when one or more members of a group feel strongly about a particular decision. It happens more frequently when a subgroup has intense attitudes and the rest of the group is less invested in the matter at stake. A vocal and persuasive group of individuals thus may be successful in swaying the opinions of a larger group.

Nominal Group Technique

One of the more interesting methods used to help groups make decisions is the **nominal group technique**. Its intent is to help group members arrive at a consensus with respect to a pending decision. It assists in getting group members to generate ideas and helps build commitment to a decision. This approach can be used by groups of various sizes. To begin, members receive a problem statement and list their ideas about the problem. Each member does

this without consulting other members; once this process is completed, the leader goes around the group one by one, asking each member to provide one of the ideas from his or her list. This process continues until all items on each person's list have been exhausted. Members may choose to pass when they no longer have any ideas to contribute. They are also free to contribute additional ideas they thought of while listening to other members. The worker writes each idea on a board or flip chart visible to all members. No evaluation of ideas occurs during this round-robin procedure.

Once all the ideas are collected and listed for the members, the leader begins to go through each idea briefly. This process helps ensure clarity and allows each member to explain the merits of an idea. No lengthy discussion of any idea occurs at this point.

In the third stage, members review the ideas collected and list those they believe are the most important or have highest priority. They may be asked to select a specific number such as 5 or 15. The goal is to reduce the overall list by one-half to three-quarters. Once completed, the leader places a checkmark by each idea supported by a member. This tabulation may be accomplished by the member listing the best ideas on a card and handing the card in or by going around in round-robin fashion again. When completed, the group has a list of those ideas that showed the most promise.

In the final stage, members rank the new list of ideas. Usually, the priority list will be small, with only five ideas permitted. These are listed on index cards, one idea per card. The cards are collected, and the leader tallies the results on the flip chart. The highest-priority idea receives a point value of five and on down to the lowest-priority item, which receives a one. A mean rank for each idea is computed by adding the numbers together and dividing by the number of members. Once completed, the idea or ideas that have the greatest support and group interest are usually clear.

The nominal group technique can produce a larger number of alternatives than most other approaches while being perceived as highly cooperative and effective by members (Graefe & Armstrong, 2011; Harvey & Holmes, 2012). This approach is usually enjoyable for the participants. It is an effective technique for developing alternatives, because it encourages the participation of all members. It also allows all points of view to be expressed and discourages making decisions without adequate discussion.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a group technique used to encourage members to produce a variety of ideas about a specific topic. It is an efficient way to develop alternate solutions to a problem. Useful in both large and small groups, brainstorming begins with a problem to be solved. Each member presents one idea, and then another member has a turn. This process continues until the leader lists all ideas on the board or flip chart. No attempt is made to rate or evaluate the ideas. Members should be free to present ideas they thought of after hearing other members' contributions (piggy-backing) and should raise their hands before participating. The leader should encourage all contributions and clarify any ideas that are not clear.

Unlike the nominal group approach, the evaluation phase does not closely follow the idea-generating phase. Ideas tend to be better if the problem is clearly and specifically defined. Brainstorming can produce large numbers of ideas and works best when the goal is generation of multiple alternatives. It does not work as well with complex situations or those in which there is only a single correct answer. There is, however, no clear evidence that brainstorming is more or less effective than the nominal group approach. Because both methods rely on an atmosphere of openness to new ideas, the worker should encourage this process and resist premature attempts to evaluate the ideas presented. In either case, ideas that receive immediate evaluation, especially a negative assessment, are less likely to be followed by other ideas. Members may feel threatened because someone ridiculed or challenged their idea and will be less likely to risk offering other ideas to the group.

DeRosa, Smith, and Hantula (2007), in a meta-analysis of previous research on the use of electronic brainstorming methods, found that conducting nominal groups online was also an effective alternative to face-to-face groups. It is also a method that has been used in many countries across the globe, including Great Britain, Netherlands, Malaysia, Australia, and China, suggesting that it is a cross-culturally effective method. Finally, it increases members' commitment to the outcome.

Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure is a highly structured technique used by groups of various sizes to make decisions and conduct business. The model of parliamentary

procedure described in *Robert's Rules of Order* (Robert, Honemann, & Balch, 2011) was devised over 140 years ago and remains the most common set of guidelines in use today. Groups agree in advance to use the rules so that there is no last-minute disagreement about how decisions will be made. Most deliberative bodies (legislatures) and large task groups, as well as many smaller task groups use *Robert's Rules* to facilitate their work. While parliamentary procedural rules are clear and designed to help the group, they are not always followed closely. Sometimes, the procedures called for in the rules become barriers to accomplishment of group goals. For example, smaller committees may decide to operate by consensus and dispense with voting on items where the group is in agreement. In this case, parliamentary procedure may be too time consuming and unwieldy. In legislative bodies, a person can easily waste the body's time by endlessly speaking on a matter before the group. Called *filibustering*, this method may stymie a body and prevent it from conducting its normal business. In these situations, groups may decide to temporarily suspend some of the usual rules of parliamentary procedure, thus preventing filibustering.

In parliamentary procedure, the business of the group occurs in the form of **motions**, which are proposed actions that the group is asked to support. A member of the social work student organization may make a motion to buy paint to refurbish the child care center. The motion might be stated as follows: "I move we purchase three gallons of paint for the child care center." If anyone else supports this motion, that member would say, "I second the motion." The motion or proposal would then be open for debate or discussion by the members. Motions generally fall into two major categories, primary motions and secondary motions. *Primary motions* bring business to the group for consideration. The motion to purchase paint is an example of a primary motion. Primary motions include both main motions (example above) and incidental motions. *Incidental motions* are used for such purposes as adjourning the group and repealing an action already taken.

Secondary motions are those used to act upon the primary motion. They include motions to amend a main motion, to refer a matter to another body, or to defer action on a motion (postpone or table). They also are used to limit debate on a motion, to reconsider a motion, or to bring up for discussion an item that had been previously tabled. Last, secondary motions include motions to challenge improper actions and to request information (e.g., point of order or point of information).

For example, a member who seeks clarification on why the body is dealing with a matter that seems to belong to another group would raise a hand and address the presiding officer by stating: "*Point of information.*" The chair would then ask the member to state the point of information and would attempt to respond to the question the member has raised. Similarly, if a group strays in its debate and is now discussing a matter that is not related to the motion on the floor, a member might state: "*Point of order.*" The member would then remind the group that they have not yet voted on the motion before them and have begun to debate some other matter. The chair would then rule on the member's point of order, ask if there is any additional debate on the motion on the floor, and then call for the vote.

Other motions do exist, but they are used too infrequently to mention in this chapter. *Robert's Rules of Order* should be consulted by those who frequently use parliamentary procedure.

The primary principle established by parliamentary procedure is that each person has a right to be heard without interruption. The person who makes a motion speaks first on a topic. All members must have an opportunity to speak if they so wish. Debate must be related to the motion on the floor and cannot be on superfluous matters. Once each person who wishes has had a chance to speak, the leader (chair) asks if there is any further debate. If there is none, the group will then vote on the proposal. Sometimes a member of the group will wish to stop debate and bring a matter to a vote. This is achieved by saying "I call the question." This motion is not debatable—it immediately halts discussion on a matter if supported by two-thirds of those present.

When the group is ready to vote, the chair will say "All those in favor of the motion, say aye." Restating the motion to be voted on or having the secretary read the motion may be best. At that point, all favoring the motion will respond "aye." Then the chair will call for all no (or nay) votes and then all abstentions. The chair will decide which side prevailed based on this voice vote and announce the results. Sometimes, members vote by raising their hands or by using paper ballots, especially when the vote appears to be close. Normally, a simple majority must approve a motion. If a tie occurs in the voting, the motion does not pass. Sometimes, however, the chair may vote to break a tie or to create a tie.

As mentioned earlier, a motion may be amended. This *amendment* means it may be changed by a member proposing to add or delete something in the original motion. To amend the previously mentioned motion,

a member might say "I move to amend the motion to place a limit of 50 dollars on the amount to be spent for paint." This amendment also needs a second and would be voted on. If approved, the amendment would then become a part of the original main motion. After all amendments are considered and voted on, the main motion (as amended) would be voted on.

There are other rules governing parliamentary procedure. These include specification of a *quorum* (the minimum number of group members that must be present to conduct business) and use of an *agenda* (an ordered list of the topics to be covered in the meeting). Most groups have a leader or chairperson responsible for helping the group conduct its business. A secretary is charged with the task of keeping the minutes (official record of a group's actions). Other officers, such as a treasurer or vice chairperson, may be needed depending upon the type and size of the group.

In larger groups, there may be subgroups or committees to which certain business is sent for review. For example, to have both standing (ongoing) committees (such as a finance committee and a personnel committee) and special ad hoc committees set up to handle specific bits or categories of business is common. Committee members and the chairperson of the committee are appointed by the chair of the larger group. The smaller the committee, the less likely it is to use more formalized parliamentary procedures. A useful online resource is the official *Robert's Rules of Order* website: <http://www.RobertsRules.com>. A social worker skilled in the use of parliamentary procedure can be of enormous assistance to task groups. Knowing how to make and amend motions and otherwise properly handle the group's business can make the group's task go smoothly. Parliamentary procedure provides a set of rules to guide groups in their deliberations; it was never meant to serve as an obstacle. In the final analysis, the wishes of the group must prevail even if a violation of *Robert's Rules* occurs.

Critical Thinking and Groups

Although groups can be effective decision makers, they can also fail to use critical thinking skills in their deliberations, sometimes with disastrous results. When group members do not critically evaluate ideas or options that are presented but simply go along with the rest of the group, they are abdicating their responsibility to themselves, the other members, and the group as a whole. Janis (1982) coined the term



EP 7a, 8a

groupthink to describe situations where groups have the illusion of agreement but have really failed to carefully consider their decisions. It usually arises when group members seek decisions too quickly, feel that dissent is not welcome, or do not want to upset the camaraderie by expressing opposing opinions. Sometimes it occurs when members do not want to be seen disagreeing with the group leader. Groupthink substitutes a harmonious atmosphere in the group for clarity, creativity, and a fuller understanding of the situation (Oliver, 2013). Groupthink has been identified as a factor in multiple situations ranging from decisions to go to war in Iraq to jury decisions, corporate governance, and health care. A critically thinking group will weigh alternatives carefully, consider both advantages and disadvantages of each option, and value the insights of all group members. Group leaders can help encourage critical thinking and reduce the tendency toward groupthink by encouraging members to present dissenting views, testing for consensus rather than assuming it exists, modeling independent thinking, and assigning a member to raise objections or present the worst-case scenario if a particular decision is carried out. Postmes, Spears, and Cihangir (2001) point out that critical group norms produced better decisions than groups that were focused on consensus building. They note that “the content of group norms is an important factor influencing the quality of group decision-making processes and that the content of group norms may be related to the group’s proneness for groupthink” (p. 918). Further review of the research by Brownstein (2003) suggested that the homogeneous composition of a group tended to produce poor decision making; Sibony (2012) highlighted the importance of having members with the courage to speak up.

Avoiding groupthink as a member or leader of a group requires several steps (Markiewicz & Breen, 2015). These include:

- Recognize your own cognitive biases. This includes developing awareness of your biases in the area of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other characteristics that affect how you value other people different from yourself.
- Recognize whether you have a tendency to act on emotion, suffer from overconfidence, or tend to avoid conflict situations.
- Encourage debate and dig for additional information whenever possible.

Critical Thinking Questions 3.2

- Have you ever been part of a group where you chose not to voice your disagreement despite your misgivings about the idea being discussed?
- What motivated you to not share your objections?
- If you were the group leader, how would you have encouraged members to think critically about their decisions?

Group Functions and Roles

Observers of most groups have concluded that there are two types of basic functions that each group must fulfill: task functions and maintenance functions. *Task functions* help to keep a group on task and working toward agreed-upon ends. *Maintenance functions*, on the other hand, ensure that the needs of group members receive attention. Both task and treatment (therapeutic) groups require members who attend to task and maintenance functions. In task groups, we are typically less concerned about the needs of the individual member and more focused on the group task. In contrast, within treatment or growth groups, the needs and interests of individual members receive more attention. Remembering that no group operates without attending to both functions is important. The emphasis placed on each function will vary depending upon the group.

In practice, the members of the group are the people who often carry out the various functions described earlier. This process occurs through one or more roles that members (and leaders) play in the group.

Task Roles

As mentioned previously, **task roles** are functional roles designed to help the group reach agreed-upon goals. Members of a group engage in particular behaviors that help facilitate this process. One such role is *information seeking* from the leader or other members. In addition to seeking information, a member may solicit the opinions of group members to help determine how people perceive some topic. *Opinion seekers* often want this information before stating their own position. *Elaborators* expand on ideas proposed to the group and help to ensure that a complete explanation is provided for all ideas.



Other members may engage in teaching or *instructing* roles. These members often clarify and remind the other members about previous decisions they have made. Still other members will *evaluate* or make judgments about the wisdom or appropriateness of any particular idea or course of action.

Some members engage in an *energizing* role by showing excitement and enthusiasm for projects; by force of their interest, they bring other members along. Energizers are the spark plugs in any group.

Once a group has made a decision, some members will serve as *recorders*, or unelected secretaries, by keeping a log or record of decisions reached or actions taken. Some may actually jot down these items, while others maintain only a mental notebook. Recorders are sometimes assisted by other members who remind the group to follow some agreed-upon rules or procedures as they continue their deliberations. *Recorders* are helpful, because they help the group stay on task and serve as the unofficial historian in a group. The *procedural technician* helps the group follow their own agreed-upon ways of making decisions.

Persons playing task roles are interested in the group completing its agreed-upon task and try to help this process. They tend to be more committed to the task and may be less concerned about the importance of group maintenance.

Maintenance Roles

Group maintenance is an important function needing attention in any group. Group **maintenance roles** are concerned with improving, enhancing, or increasing group functioning. Task groups often pay less attention to this facet than treatment groups do, but the function of group maintenance cannot be ignored. Group maintenance roles include harmonizer, compromiser, encourager, follower, tension reliever, and listener. The titles assigned to these different roles are less important than the behaviors that members perform to accomplish the group maintenance function. As suggested by the titles, group members focusing on group building and maintenance encourage other members to participate (*encourager*), and they listen carefully (*listener*). They also follow the directions of others (*follower*), emphasize harmony and compromise (*harmonizer* and *compromiser*, respectively), and relieve rough moments in the group, often through humor (*tension reliever*). The goal is to attend to the group's socioemotional climate and help the group maintain its "we" feeling.

Paying attention to the needs of individual members naturally occurs in most treatment groups. Members are selected for or join these groups with the expectation that their social and emotional needs will be given concerted attention. Task groups, on the other hand, often assume that members' personal needs are secondary to the group's purpose. A balance between meeting both types of needs, task and socioemotional, must occur in all groups. There almost always will be more attention to the task of the group and less to individual needs of the members in a board of directors or a multidisciplinary care conference in a hospital. Likewise, a group for men who abuse their spouses or a group for women surviving breast cancer will have a greater emphasis on individual needs and feelings of the members. Ultimately, all groups need members who attend to both functions. Task groups that ignore the feelings and needs of members are not likely to endure, because members will drop out or otherwise avoid participating. Treatment groups without sufficient task focus will not reach their goals of changing individual behavior. Group members will become frustrated because they see no progress. Eventually, a therapeutic group that does not maintain a task focus will lose members, funding, or both.

Nonfunctional Roles

Both task and maintenance roles are designed to help achieve the goals of the group. However, not all the behavior of group members can be classified into the two categories described previously. Some roles played by members simply meet only their own needs. These behaviors include aggressiveness, blocking, seeking recognition for self, dominating the group, seeking help, and confessing past errors. These roles do not further the progress of the group.

Aggressive members attack others and, by putting them down, attempt to raise themselves. Such members are likely to challenge the ideas and motives of others and soon become a problem for the group. *Blockers* are usually the ones to say "Yes, but..." to all the ideas or solutions proposed in the group. No matter what the proposal, they will always have a reason why it will not succeed. *Recognition seekers* will engage in a variety of behaviors, all of which are designed to focus the group's attention on themselves. Like the people who dominate (*dominators*) the group by talking incessantly or people who seek help from the group for their

own problems, those *seeking recognition* have personal needs that are not being met. That behavior indicates a need to which the group cannot respond. The person who confesses (*confessor*) past mistakes often embarrasses the group by inappropriately disclosing personal behavior. For example, at the first meeting of a group, when members take turns introducing themselves, one member remarks that she had an abortion once. This disclosure makes some members of the group uncomfortable and shows the member's insensitivity to the usual boundaries experienced within such groups. These roles are important, because they indicate the needs of the individual member, but they often do not help the group toward its goals. A member who behaves in this fashion often risks rebuke from the group and slows the group in its achievement of objectives.

Other nonfunctional roles include the scapegoat, defensive member, deviant member, quiet member, and internal leader (Shulman, 2012). *Scapegoats* draw upon themselves the wrath of other members and serve as someone to blame when things are not going well. *Defensive members*, on the other hand, do not accept blame for anything and deny responsibility for their actions. *Deviant members* engage in behavior they know the group will oppose or find annoying, such as continuing to speak out of turn, interrupting others, or refusing to participate in group activities. *Quiet members* simply do not participate, and they make getting to know them impossible for anyone. Finally, the *internal leader* may vie for leadership of the group and attempt to wrestle control from the designated leader. Internal leaders are often members with significant natural leadership ability or influence over other members.

Groups need guidance and help from the leader to recognize and confront nonfunctional roles. At various times in the developmental history of a group (i.e., as a specific group develops and changes over time), different roles may be needed. The leader must be familiar with task and group-building or maintenance roles and skilled enough to model them for group members. Leaders also must be keenly aware of what the group needs at any time. They then must either address that need themselves or draw upon other group members who will play the proper role. Continued nonfunctional role-playing by a group member usually suggests that the group itself is not functioning well. Such behavior should

not be ignored or allowed to continue unabated. Table 3.1 summarizes the wide variety of potentially positive and negative group roles, as well as those considered nonfunctional.

Table 3.1 A Variety of Group Roles

Potentially Positive Roles
Information Seeker
Opinion Seeker
Elaborator
Instructor
Evaluator
Energizer
Recorder
Procedural Technician
Harmonizer
Compromiser
Encourager
Follower
Tension Reliever
Listener
Potentially Negative Roles
Aggressor
Blocker
Recognition Seeker
Dominator
Help Seeker
Confessor
Nonfunctional Roles
Scapegoat
Defensive Member
Deviant Member
Quiet Member
Internal Leader

Using Empathy and Other Interpersonal Skills with Groups **LO 3-5**

Chapter 2 discusses a variety of skills important for micro or one-on-one practice, such as relationship-building skills with clients (warmth, empathy, and genuineness) and attending skills (including eye contact, active listening, facial expressions, and body position). In addition, Chapter 2 describes a number of interviewing skills, including encouragement, reflective responding, rephrasing, clarification, interpretation, providing information, summarizing, and self-disclosure. As might be expected, these skills are as applicable in groups as they are in one-on-one interviews. In therapeutic or growth-oriented groups, the worker is likely to use these skills and to encourage group members to do the same. Part of the worker's function, indeed, may be to teach these skills to members of the group. For example, members of a parenting skills group will benefit from learning how to listen actively to their children. Members of chemical dependency treatment groups will need to engage in self-disclosure, and leaders may engage in modeling this behavior.

Task groups typically have less emphasis on such matters as self-disclosure, because it is not usually related to the purpose of the group. Likewise, interpretation of behavior and reflective responding is used less often in a staffing for a nursing home patient. Listening skills and the ability to summarize, clarify, and provide information are, however, just as important in task groups as they are in one-on-one interviews and in treatment-oriented groups. Viewing the development of skills as a continuing process is important. Some skills essential for one-on-one situations must be used in small groups and when working with larger system levels such as an agency or large governmental organization. At the same time, a worker with a group must use additional skills that include playing task and group maintenance roles and using parliamentary procedure and nominal group and brainstorming techniques.

Groups and the Generalist Intervention Model (GIM)

The ability to utilize the steps in the Generalist Intervention Model (GIM) is also important with groups. For



EP 6, 7, 8

example, the engagement step is important in treatment groups, where the worker develops a professional relationship with group members and conveys warmth, empathy, and other indicators of interest toward all of them. In task groups, engagement is often seen in the behavior of the worker who introduces him- or herself and seeks introductions from other members. It is also evident in the listening skills used by the worker, whether as leader or member.

The assessment step occurs in both task and treatment groups as members seek to understand the purpose of the group, the needs and potential contributions of members, and their commitment to the group. Recognizing and acknowledging the strengths of each group member helps maintain the focus on growth and helps empower the group. Group members must identify issues or problems they will work on, while considering the role that the larger environment plays in influencing the problem.

Planning also occurs in both treatment and task groups. The planning step identifies the actions that need to be taken to address the task of the group. It includes prioritizing the issues to be dealt with, including translating problems into needs. Consideration of alternative solutions is done by group members in both task and treatment groups. Selecting goals and objectives, which then suggest concrete steps that members or the group itself will take, is required in all types of groups. For example, a group for women experiencing domestic abuse might discuss alternatives available to a member considering whether or not to return to the abuser. A board of directors will review various possible ways to increase income and reduce expenses for the agency. Treatment groups often use a general working agreement (or contract) whereby members might commit themselves to meeting for six sessions to learn assertiveness skills.

The implementation phase of GIM is sometimes referred to as the working stage of the group. Individual members wrestle with the goals and objectives they have set for themselves. In task groups, the day-to-day discussion and decision making is what occurs. Groups follow (and sometimes revise) the plans made during the planning stage. Progress toward goals is monitored and acknowledged.

Evaluation is a critical activity in groups. Both task and treatment groups have goals and objectives that can be measured or otherwise assessed. Those struggling with substance abuse issues can tally the

number of days away from drug use. Patients recovering from surgery can determine the extent to which they feel more in control of their lives and confident about the future. A multidisciplinary team can determine if the group devised a thorough set of recommendations for helping a particular client.

Critical Thinking Questions 3.3

Assume your class is asked to evaluate the effectiveness of a new course designed to help students become more assertive. If the class is not effective, it will be eliminated and the instructor terminated.

- What are some possible options to help evaluate the effectiveness of the assertiveness class?
- Of the options you identified, which one do you believe is most useful? Why?
- What would you say to a fellow student who was worried that a bad evaluation of the class would mean that an instructor would lose his or her job?

All groups reach a point of termination, which may occur, for example, when the six sessions for learning anger management techniques have ended or when the ad hoc committee has completed its set of recommendations. Both task and treatment groups are concerned about the need for follow-up. A task group that failed to come up with a proposal may be asked to continue or be replaced by another group. A treatment group of clients with ongoing individual needs may suggest an appropriate referral. GIM is an important tool for workers involved with groups.

Intervention Skills for Task and Treatment Groups

Whether the social worker is leading a task group or facilitating a treatment group, several essential skills are likely to be needed. These skills include conflict resolution, modeling and coaching, team building, confrontation, consultation, coordination, and using structure.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is a fact of life. It occurs routinely within relationships and can have positive or negative consequences depending upon how it is handled. Conflict may arise from power or status differences, personality disagreements, or from opposing values or belief systems.

Conflict tends to be viewed as negative, because too often it is not resolved or managed successfully. Conflict situations may be approached in a logical and step-by-step method that includes recognizing the conflict, assessing it, identifying an appropriate method of resolution, and implementing the resolution.

Recognizing Conflict

Recognizing potential or actual conflict is easy when people do not talk to one another or are openly hostile, unnecessarily polite, or outright rude. Ideas suggested by one side may be routinely rejected by the other. The conflict may be between individuals or groups. It may be created by jealousy and other personal reactions, confusion, or misunderstanding. The example in Highlight 3.5 suggests how even the best plans can create conflict.

HIGHLIGHT 3.5

The Family Treatment Program: Recognizing Conflict

The new specialized family treatment program was barely 6 months old when problems began to appear. It was designed to provide intensive in-home treatment by a team of family workers with low caseloads. The program had initially been greeted as a very positive approach to working with multi-barrier families. Within a few months, the team was beginning to prove the merits of the idea. At the same time, workers who were not part of the specialized unit began to complain. Soon, the source of the complaints became clear. With several workers attached to the special program, those

remaining were being asked to handle larger caseloads. Many saw the benefits of the new program but felt their extra workload was unfair. Those with larger caseloads felt they were assuming too much of the burden and resented it.

When designed, the new program had no alternative plans to handle an increased caseload for the rest of the staff. Nor was any thought given to how removing workers from the regular family unit would affect the workload of those who remained. Clearly, the agency administration had a problem.

HIGHLIGHT 3.6**That Is Not What I Said: Assessing Conflict**

John was in his second month as director of the Eastern Washington Service Center. The agency had been wracked with scandal before John became director. Under a recent director, the agency had lost its entire building fund because of poor stock investments. John's task was to return the agency to a healthy financial footing and restore its reputation. In his first report to the board of directors, John explained recent changes in the agency and tried to highlight some of the accomplishments. To help improve staff morale and productivity,

he announced that he had recently bought some chairs. Almost immediately one board member at the other end of the room exclaimed angrily, "What?" John was momentarily perplexed. Surely purchasing a couple of office chairs was not a matter of major concern to a member of the board of directors. Then the board member asked, "Did you say you bought shares or chairs?" John quickly assured the board that he had indeed purchased desk chairs, not shares of stock, the cause of the earlier scandal.

Assessing Conflict

Assessing conflict usually requires talking directly to the parties involved. Often, the source becomes clear during this process. In the situation in Highlight 3.5, the source was readily identified. Sometimes, other problems mask the source, or the problem is the result of miscommunication. In the latter case, the problem can be more easily resolved. Highlight 3.6 gives a simple example.

Creating a problem does not take much effort. Undoubtedly, unclear messages between sender and listener cause their share of conflictual situations.

Choosing a Strategy and Intervening

Identifying the source of a conflict is an important step in resolving it. Once identified, appropriate strategies can be considered or devised. For example, if the problem is simply between people, a variety of approaches can be used. These include bargaining or negotiating (discussed in Chapter 4) and other methods designed to separate those in conflict. When a structural problem (one related to agency design or organization) is causing the conflict, the solution must also be structural. For example, a disagreement over assignments may be resolved by modifying the assignment system or redistributing an unfair workload. Sometimes, an interpersonal problem can be resolved through structural means. Highlight 3.7 illustrates this point.

Although positive outcomes are not always possible and some conflicts cannot be managed, progress can usually be made. In some cases, the following strategies will prove effective.

Win-Lose and Win-Win Situations One of the ways we can avoid becoming involved in conflict is to recognize when a win-lose conflict situation is developing. The nature of competition often produces a win-lose mentality. Much of our society is structured around the idea of winning or beating the competition. In group meetings, there are always clues to win-lose situations. When you feel yourself lining up on one side or the other, you are probably becoming involved in a win-lose incident. Sometimes our language gives us away. If we say or believe that our way is the only way or the best way, we are implicitly giving a message that the other person's point of view is wrong. Eventually, win-lose situations become lose-lose situations because neither side benefits. The side that loses feels bad and may be resentful. Those on the losing side often lose their sense of being part of the group and may even sabotage things if sufficiently upset. Losers stop listening to the other side and soon see additional areas where they disagree. Resolving win-lose situations requires that we first be aware of them. Once alerted, there are a number of skills and techniques that can be employed to defuse the situation. Some strategies that are often successful for resolving or avoiding win-lose situations in groups include:

1. Asking each person to listen actively to the other. Active listening requires that you demonstrate your understanding of what the other person has said by paraphrasing it.
2. Role playing for the parties to show how their communication looks to an outsider.

HIGHLIGHT 3.7**Square Peg in a Round Hole: Choosing a Strategy**

Both workers and clients complained about the treatment they received from Ann. With responsibility for the reception area, Ann was supposed to greet all clients and visitors, notify workers of their arrival, answer phone calls and direct them to other staff, and keep track of clients when the worker came to the front desk to meet them. Workers considered her rude to clients and felt she was impatient and irritable most of the time. She was likened to Charles Dickens's character Scrooge.

The agency administrative staff had discussed the situation before, and the supervisor had talked to Ann, all to no avail. Ann would try to improve, but things always seemed to end up the same. The administrative staff was working on a reorganization plan that would require assigning new responsibilities to one supervisor and reassigning an additional experienced clerical staff member. After a brief discussion, the group

decided to reassign Ann to new duties and move her from the reception desk to the reorganized unit. A new receptionist would be hired, and Ann would be working with day care providers and foster parents. She would handle financial details and report to a new supervisor. Within days of the administrative reorganization, Ann was hard at work on her new tasks. She stopped complaining, treated everyone with respect, and underwent a remarkable transformation. This change continued, and Ann was never again reported for abusive or rude behavior. The agency reorganization achieved two goals simultaneously, ending a problem in the reception area and dealing with a redistribution of workload. Once away from the stress of being the receptionist, Ann developed into a highly valued member of the agency team.

3. Asking both sides to list their areas of similarity and agreement.
4. Attempting to identify goals that transcend the differences between the parties and working for solutions that fulfill these goals.
5. Finding objective criteria or values that can be used to evaluate other solutions.
6. Seeking agreement from each side to make concessions that will meet the needs of the other.
7. Meeting with one or more members outside the group to try to find a solution to the conflict.

Once agreements appear to be reached, testing to make sure they are genuine is important. Asking both sides to describe explicitly their understanding of the agreed-upon solution is wise. Miscommunication that originally caused a problem can just as easily disrupt the solution. The ability to resolve conflict successfully or at least to manage it is an important skill for any social worker.

Modeling and Coaching

Albert Bandura's (1986, 2004, 2006) work on modeling suggests the enormous importance that watching others has on our behavior. Social workers may find modeling helpful in a number of situations, including teaching new skills, showing clients alternative

methods for resolving problems, and helping clients develop a repertoire of responses to problematic situations. An example of this is presented in Highlight 3.8. Bandura has identified conditions that enhance the likelihood that a model's behavior will be copied. These conditions include: (1) the observer's attention level or awareness of the model, (2) the observer's retention of the modeled behavior, (3) the observer's ability to perform modeled behavior, and (4) the observer's motivation to perform the behavior. Awareness of the factors that influence effective modeling allows the social worker to increase the likelihood that the modeled behavior will be performed by the observer. In groups, this modeling can be achieved by several methods, including:

1. Asking group members to pay special attention to the model's behavior
2. Describing for the group why the modeled behavior is important
3. Having members role play the modeled behavior to ensure that they understood and can perform it
4. Using praise both for the group members and the person who models the appropriate behavior
5. Giving members immediate corrective feedback when they attempt a new behavior

HIGHLIGHT 3.8**Teaching Disciplinary Techniques:
Modeling and Coaching**

The second meeting of a practical parenting group began with a review by the social worker, Marjorie, of what had been learned in the first session. Marjorie then discussed the program for the day. The major goal was to learn two new, nonpunitive techniques for disciplining children. The first technique was a time-out procedure. Marjorie told the group they would see a brief videotape of a mother using the time-out technique with her child. Group members were asked to watch the mother carefully and take notes on what she did. Marjorie emphasized the importance of this technique for managing certain kinds of situations that commonly arise between parent and child. She quickly summarized the research on this approach as well as her own experience with its use. Using this approach described, Marjorie was demonstrating two of the guidelines for

modeling: asking the observer to pay special attention to the model and describing why the modeled behavior was important.

After the videotape had been played twice, Marjorie asked one of the parents to volunteer to model the time-out technique with Marjorie playing the child's role. Then each parent took a turn playing the roles of parent and child. Marjorie praised good examples of the time-out technique and suggested improvements for group members who were having more difficulty.

In the last minutes of the session, Marjorie used the remaining guidelines. She asked the group members to role-play the desired behavior and used praise or corrective feedback, depending upon how well the person performed the desired behavior.

Coaching is a skill that includes giving the client specific information as well as corrective feedback. For example, a social worker may suggest a new way of approaching a difficult coworker, ask the client to role-play it, and then provide feedback about ways to improve. In coaching, the worker may choose to intervene immediately after a client has engaged in a behavior. If the behavior to be changed includes verbal communication, the worker may wish to ignore the content and focus on the process. Describing the group member's behavior, instead of evaluating it, is always appropriate. Evaluative comments typically exacerbate problems instead of assisting communication skills. People often resent direct criticism.

One approach to coaching would be to ask a group member to speak directly to another member, rather than to the group as a whole or to the worker. This method is especially helpful if the group involves family members or others with whom the speaker frequently interacts. For example, in the couples group, Juan tells the social worker that he would like his wife to be more affectionate. The social worker asks Juan to turn directly to his wife and tell her specifically what he would like her to do. In this way, Juan must address his wife, who is ultimately the only person who can meet his need. This approach forces Juan to be more specific, because "being more affectionate" has many meanings.

Coaching also involves encouraging members to try new behavior. A common barrier to behaving differently is fear that one will look stupid or perform poorly. The worker can help overcome this fear by encouraging and supporting the member. This technique is especially effective if the behavior to be copied has already been modeled. Assertiveness training typically uses a combination of modeling and coaching to help group members develop and use new skills. When used by the worker in tandem, these skills can increase the likelihood that the members will adopt and continue the new behavior or communication patterns.

Team Building

Team building is the process of creating a group of individuals with the expertise, dedication, and characteristics needed to achieve a specific purpose. It requires both careful consideration of those who will compose the team and attention to the conditions that will enhance the team's ability to perform. The importance of working as a team member should be clear by now. The use of multidisciplinary teams, staffings, and similar work groups is sufficiently common in social work that every worker can expect to become a member of one such team or another. Whether or not the team works effectively is often a result of the team-building efforts that have occurred. Johnson and Yanca (2010) and others have identified some of the

problems that frequently interfere with the ability of a team to develop. Our emphasis here is on strategies to build a team, while overcoming common barriers.

Team building can best occur when there is strong organizational support for the team. An important way of supporting a team is with time. This process requires providing sufficient time for the team to meet independently of their case-handling responsibilities, so that team meetings will not be an additional burden competing with their regular job responsibilities. If the only time the team meets is around individual cases, there will likely be limited ability to develop the “we” feeling so important to effective functioning. Adequate time for team building also allows the team to agree on goals and roles and responsibilities ahead of time. These responsibilities include not only decision-making processes, but also who will assume leadership responsibilities.

Leadership for the team can be handled in a variety of ways. The leader can be selected by the team members or appointed by an outside supervisor. That the leader be well qualified is crucial. That is, he or she should have experience working on teams and making decisions as part of a team. Although members bring varying levels of expertise to the team, all should be seen as more or less equal participants. Clear status differentials among members may impair group functioning. Some team building will occur as members become more familiar with their colleagues. This familiarity includes communication patterns, terminology, professional jargon, and interpersonal styles. Quite simply, it involves getting used to each other and how the team interacts. A well-functioning team will be composed of members who understand and respect one another's expertise, carry out agreed-upon tasks, and are cooperative. Individual members must be comfortable working in an interdisciplinary environment and not lose sight of their professional orientation. A social worker on an interdisciplinary team is still a social worker; no other professional is likely to bring an identical perspective to the team's deliberations. Social work is the only profession with a primary focus on the person within the environment and a concomitant obligation to work for change with both the client system and that environment.

The work of teams is achieved in the same planned change steps described earlier in this text. The team must define the problem, select appropriate goals, use their collective knowledge to consider alternatives,

develop an intervention plan, and carry it out. Evaluation of the plan and process must follow the implementation phase. Team members should agree in advance how this process will occur. If this process is done and the other tasks mentioned earlier are performed, an effective team is likely to result.

Confrontation

Confrontation within a group tends to be more discomforting than confronting individuals on a one-on-one basis. Yet to be effective as a team player, group leader, or member, the worker must be able to use confrontation. Chapter 2 describes some of the situations where confrontation is appropriate. In this section, we will discuss briefly the importance of confrontation in groups.

Chapter 2 describes confronting discrepancies, primarily in relation to working with individuals. Discrepancies that occur within groups also require some level and type of confrontation. A worker in a treatment group who determines that a member has engaged in behavior warranting confrontation has a responsibility to follow through and confront that individual. There are, however, at least two ways to approach confrontation that can make it more palatable and effective. When workers choose to confront a client directly, for example because of a discrepancy between verbal and other behavior, a good opportunity arises to model appropriate confrontation for other members. The worker engages in a nonblaming type of confrontation by pointing out the discrepancy and how it affects the worker, such as by using an “I” statement.

A second manner of confrontation involves having the worker in a group ask the entire group to take responsibility for problem solving. Thus, a worker might say, “Is anyone else bothered by Mike's assertion that he is going straight, after saying that he was arrested again last night?” This approach places responsibility for confronting Mike on the group instead of the worker, underscoring an important principle in treatment groups.

Confrontation in task groups is also essential. Members must be able to confront other members who do not carry out agreed-upon tasks or who engage in other behavior that threatens the group. For example, a team member represents himself to the public as having more authority and responsibility in the group than what he really had. In other words, he believes he did most of the work and therefore wants most of the

credit. In one example, group members charged with planning a conference took responsibility for telling the errant member that no single member is appointed as a conference coordinator and that the group reserves this role for itself. In their view, they all put in a lot of effort and deserve to share the credit accordingly.

Although there will usually be a brief moment of discomfort when confrontation is used, the costs of not being confrontational are too high to avoid this responsibility. As always, confrontation should be used judiciously and tactfully. One should have both empathy and respect for the sensitivities of the person being confronted.

Consultation

As described throughout this chapter, the worker may serve as a consultant to the group. Consider a worker who provided consultation to a Parents Anonymous group. The group's goal was to provide a supportive experience for parents who abuse their children and to help these parents avoid such behavior in the future. The worker's role included providing consultation on available community services, strategies for successfully negotiating agency bureaucracies, and nonpunitive ideas for child management. The worker informed group members about local resources, shared his knowledge of agency eligibility requirements, and helped clients assess the appropriateness of the service for meeting their needs. The consultant role is basically that of an advisor who provides information, suggestions, ideas, and feedback. A consultant lacks administrative power over the consultee but has special knowledge or expertise that is of value to the recipient. The consultee is free to accept, modify, or reject the advice.

Consultation may be either case consultation or program consultation, or it may include elements of both. In *case consultation*, the focus is on a specific client or situation, and the consultation may be provided to either social workers or nonsocial workers. An example would be consultation provided to a nursing home staff on a particular client.

Program consultation may occur when the consultant works with supervisory or administrative staff on ways to improve service. In this case, the focus may be on agency policies and practices instead of a specific client.

In one instance, a social worker was asked to serve as a consultant to a family planning agency. The agency director believed that the intercession

of a consultant could help ameliorate problems occurring among volunteers serving the agency. The problems seemed to focus on disagreements between and among volunteer group members and the director. Volunteers appeared resistive to suggestions and direction provided by the agency director. The consultant met separately with the director and then jointly with the director and the volunteers. Several salient issues of concern to the volunteers were identified during this meeting. The primary issue involved a perception that the director was favoring one member of the volunteer group over the others. The consultant suggested that the director address this issue directly with the group. The director publicly announced his engagement to the "favored" volunteer and took pains from that point on to ensure that his interactions with the group did not show favoritism. The end result was improved service delivery to agency clients, increased openness on the part of the director, and a greater sense on the part of the volunteers that they were making a valued contribution to the agency.

Although no single model of social work consultation has emerged, consultation does involve a purpose, a problem, and a process. Ultimately, the success of the consultation depends upon the relationship between consultant and consultee. The expertise and capability of the consultant is only as effective as the relationship between the two allows. Once again, skills important for one-on-one interventions are just as useful when working with groups.

Coordination

Coordination "is the working together of two or more service providers in activity focused on a particular client or focused on persons in a particular category" (Johnson & Yanca, 2010, p. 436). Johnson and Yanca describe the coordinating function of social work as encompassing both collaboration and teamwork. To be successful, coordination requires that all parties have a common goal. The goal may relate to a particular client or include provision of services to a target population. There is an expectation that all parties believe that improvements will occur if they manage to coordinate their services.

Case management often involves coordination of services provided by a variety of professionals. The focus is on assuring that all services provided to a client are accomplished in a way that achieves common goals and meets client needs. Often the social worker is the person who has the case management

responsibility and ensures that agreed-upon services are provided. (Case management is discussed further in Chapter 15.) Coordination is especially important when the service providers have different professional orientations or when both formal and informal resources must be used to help the client. To be most effective, the social worker providing coordination must value and believe in the competence of services provided by others. The worker must also ensure that all important information is communicated to all parties. That sufficient time be made available for building relationships among the participants, in addition to participants having support for their efforts, is important.

Using Structure

Structure describes “the use of planned, systematic, time-limited interventions and program activities” (Toseland & Rivas, 2012, p. 271). One of the facets of structure is the use of time. Group meetings should begin and end at an agreed-upon time. Material brought up at the last minute is best held for the next meeting.

Agendas help structure time, ensuring that topics or activities to be covered are known to all. This structuring places responsibility on all members to stay on task. Sometimes, the amount of time to be spent on each topic is specified, further structuring the use of time. In treatment groups, structure may include spending different amounts of time on each client’s issues. In many groups, all members take turns sharing their progress since the previous meeting, with major focus on one member. This process is then followed in successive meetings so all members have opportunities to focus on their problems. The worker is largely responsible for enforcing time constraints and models this for the members. Frequently, the entire intervention is highly structured. Many educational groups are well structured, including blocks of time allocated for specific topics, group activities designed to teach important concepts, and even role playing. The degree of structure needed may vary from one type of group to another. The worker will need to be flexible in planning and working with groups.

Chapter Summary

The following summarizes this chapter’s content as it relates to each learning objective (LO) presented at the beginning of the chapter. Chapter content helps prepare students to:

LO 3-1 | Articulate the benefits and functions of treatment and task groups.

Working with groups requires recognizing the benefits of groups, which include mutual assistance, connecting with others, testing out new behaviors, achieving individual and group goals, and decision making. It also involves awareness of the types of groups, both task and treatment, that are used in social work. Task groups include boards of directors, task forces, committees and commissions, legislative bodies, staff meetings, multidisciplinary teams, case conferences and staffings, and social action groups.

Treatment groups include growth, therapy, educational, socialization, and support groups. As the name suggests, these groups are focused on the individual needs of group members.

Social networking groups often are used in concert with both task and treatment groups, and social media may prove helpful for addressing certain client needs.

LO 3-2 | Attend to professional roles in groups.

Workers play multiple roles in groups. Included roles are broker, mediator, educator, and facilitator. The roles played by social workers tend to depend on the needs of the group as well as the type of group that is being led.

LO 3-3 | Utilize theoretical frameworks in group assessment, intervention, and evaluation.

An understanding of basic group dynamics is essential for leading or participating in both task and treatment groups. Factors of importance include the stages of group development, through which most groups evolve, and the group’s culture, norms, and power structure, all of which will influence the behavior of individual members. Size is another factor in group dynamics, as it can impact on the effectiveness of the group’s work. Too large a group may interfere with the

appeal of the group to members, as well as their willingness to interact with each other.

The composition of the group is also an important dynamic. Characteristics such as members' ages, genders, personalities, verbal abilities, ethnicities, and others can affect the degree to which the group achieves its purpose. Although there is no hard-and-fast rule for deciding what factors are most important in every type of group, the social worker must pay attention to these characteristics when forming a group.

The duration or length of a group may also be an important consideration. Some groups are designed to be ongoing, whereas others are expected to conclude after a finite number of sessions. The needs of the group members and the purpose of the group usually influence its duration.

LO 3-4 | *Select appropriate problem-solving and decision-making approaches with groups.*

All groups must make some decisions, and this is particularly true of task groups. There are many avenues to decision making in groups, each with strengths and drawbacks. They include decision making by consensus, by compromise, by majority rule, by individual fiat, through persuasion by an expert, through averaging of individual members' opinions, and through persuasion by a minority. Decision making by consensus and compromise usually lead to more satisfaction among members, while decision making by majority is often used with larger groups and may satisfy only those in the majority.

Other methods of decision making and problem solving include the nominal group technique and brainstorming, both of which are designed to deeply involve individual members in the process. Parliamentary procedure, a highly structured decision-making technique, is often used by larger groups such as legislative bodies; it involves procedures designed to allow minority voices to be heard and majority voices to make the final decision.

Social workers leading groups also must use a variety of knowledge and skills, such as understanding how to ensure critical thinking in the decision-making process, recognizing both task and maintenance roles needed to help a group function, and being aware of nonfunctional roles that impede the group's progress. Task roles include information and opinion seeking, elaborating, instructing, energizing, recording, and being a procedural technician.

Maintenance roles of members include encourager, listener, follower, harmonizer, compromiser, and

tension reliever. Both task and maintenance roles can be played by group members as well as by the group leader.

Nonfunctional roles include aggressors, blockers, confessors, recognition seekers, dominators, confessors, scapegoats, defensive members, deviators, quiet members, and internal leaders.

LO 3-5 | *Use empathy and other interpersonal skills with groups.*

As group leaders, social workers must be able to use many micro skills, including relationship building, empathy, warmth, genuineness, and attending skills, such as eye contact, active listening, appropriate facial expressions, and body position. Other important skills are discussed in more depth in Chapter 2 of this text.

Workers need to be familiar with the Generalist Intervention Model as it applies to groups, as well as specific skills needed in both task and treatment groups. These include conflict resolution strategies and steps, modeling and coaching group members, team building, confrontation, consultation, and coordination. Workers also must know how to use structure to help the group achieve its goals. Structure includes the use of time and the development of an agenda, or plan, for what is going to occur at a given meeting. The degree of structure needed may vary from one type of group to another.

COMPETENCY NOTES

The following identifies where Educational Policy (EP) competencies and component behaviors are discussed in the chapter.

EP 1c Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication. (p. 114): Part of professional demeanor involves working effectively with others. This is especially true in task groups such as boards of directors, committees, and social action groups. (p. 114): Social workers are called upon to play different professional roles depending on the needs of the particular type of group. Common roles in social work include broker, mediator, educator, and facilitator.

EP 3 (Competency 3) Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice. (pp. 105, 107): Task groups involving social action goals are often aimed at advocating for human rights

and social and economic justice. Social action groups can occur in almost any setting.

EP 3a Social workers apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels and engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice. (pp. 107–108): Task groups can serve many purposes, including advocating for client access to services. Social workers can also participate as leaders or members of social advocacy groups designed to advance social, economic, and environmental justice.

EP 3b Engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice. (p. 108): The potential for advocating for changes can be found in your own agency as well as in the larger environment.

EP 4 (Competency 4) Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice. (p. 108): Participatory Action Research (PAR) is based on the belief that it is important to work directly with those who are affected by a situation and involve them in the process of gathering data, analyzing the results, and translating the findings to decision makers.

EP 5b Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services. (pp. 104, 106–109): Often, social action groups are created after an assessment has determined that social welfare or economic policies are impeding the ability of citizens to receive needed services or other kinds of assistance.

EP 6 (Competency 6) Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities. (p. 112): The first step in working with groups of any kind is engagement.

EP 7 (Competency 7) Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities. (p. 127): Social workers must understand, employ, and participate in groups as part of their professional responsibility. Groups represent another size of system with which generalist social workers must engage. Working effectively with groups requires specific knowledge and skills that span all steps in the planned change process.

EP 7a Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies. (pp. 105, 107–108): Critical thinking is required when making decisions and involves considering the pros and cons of particular courses of action. (p. 123): Critical thinking is needed when helping a group make decisions. Failure to employ critical thinking can lead to groupthink and poor decisions. Thinking critically about evaluation of practice helps produce better outcome assessments.

EP 7b Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies. (pp. 114–126): Various theoretical frameworks and models are needed to understand groups. These include such things as basic group dynamics, stages of group development, and the group's culture, norms, and power structure, all of which will influence the behavior of individual members. Decision-making models and patterns are often employed when working with groups. Concepts such as group functions and roles are important to consider when working with groups.

EP 7d Select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies. (pp. 128–134): Treatment groups are commonly used to help clients resolve problems. This process requires a careful assessment, as well as knowledge of effective intervention approaches and the needs of clients. In task groups such as boards of directors and agency committees, the goals are related to organizational needs.

EP 8 (Competency 8) Intervene With Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities. (pp. 103–135): Social workers must have the knowledge and skills to work effectively with almost any type of group.

EP 8a Critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies. (pp. 104, 123): Working with groups typically involves the processes of engagement; identifying desired

outcomes; collecting, organizing, and interpreting client data; assessing strengths and limitations; agreeing on goals and objectives; carrying out the interventions; and monitoring and evaluating the intervention. These are essentially the same steps as in the Generalist Intervention Model (GIM) planned change process (pp. 53–55).

EP 8b Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies. (pp. 114–115, 119): Understanding decision-making frameworks is important when working with task groups.

EP 8d Negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies. (pp. 104, 108, 114): One possible role of the practitioner working with groups is to help members mediate disputes and negotiate with the environment or other systems. Another much different role is as advocate for and with a group.

EP 8e Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals. (p. 104): Social workers require specific knowledge and skills to

assist group members to reach their goals and to terminate their involvement in the group.

EP 9c Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes. (p. 105): Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a method of conducting research in a community to gather data about a particular problem. It is a method that uses research tools to inform practice and practice skills to enhance the quality of the research.

EP 9d Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. (p. 109): Brown, Reyes, Brown, and Gonzenbach (2012) demonstrated the effectiveness of groups for female adult incest survivors. Similarly, Duffany and Panos (2009) found that group treatment is an effective intervention for child victims of sexual abuse and results in fewer of these youth becoming perpetrators later in life. Long, Fulton, Dolley, and Hollin (2011) also found positive outcomes with group treatment of dual-diagnosed women in secure mental health facilities, as did Morell and Myers (2009) in their review of group treatment effectiveness with substance abusers.

