Group Development Theory

OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

✔ Discuss the usefulness of group development theory for group leaders.
✔ Describe various group development theory models and the essential components of a practical group development theory.
✔ Explain four classic group development theories.
✔ Discuss how group member characteristics influence group development and the issues that emerge during group interaction.
✔ Outline essential themes in group development theories.

INTRODUCTION

Group development theory helps leaders anticipate events that occur regularly during a group's life span. Group development theories describe “patterns of growth and change that occur in groups throughout their life cycle, from formation to dissolution” (Forsyth, 1990, p. 76). Similarly, group development theory presents phases of interpersonal activity organized around the resolution of specific interpersonal concerns.

Group counselors and therapists need to understand group development theory for several important reasons. First, all groups encounter similar phases of development, each of which addresses a significant interpersonal issue. Because group development theory suggests a sequence in which interpersonal issues
arise, leaders can plan initial and concluding sessions, anticipate the emergence of interpersonal issues, and understand surfacing issues as naturally occurring phenomena. Second, group development theory provides a framework that organizes and contextualizes the observation of process and structure. This framework describes how interpersonal concerns influence the nature of interaction and evolving group structure. Finally, group development theory offers leaders a means to understand and predict dominant group issues and patterns of group interaction on the basis of the interpersonal styles of group members.

MODELS

Group development theories have been formulated from a variety of theoretical and research perspectives. These theories have been structured using different developmental models that are important to understand because they provide a system for evaluating and applying group development theory. Gibbard, Hartman, and Mann (1974) categorized these models and described their strengths and limitations.

The linear-progressive model links group development with movement toward a goal. This model sees groups moving from an initial stage of tentative interaction, to the resolution of interactive problems, and finally to a stage of productivity. It ignores the presence of recurring group issues and group termination.

The life-cycle model addresses the omission of the final stage of group development by describing the experiences members have as they adjust to group termination. However, this is also a linear model that suggests that once group problems are resolved, they never recur.

The recurring-cycle model describes cycles of recurring themes in group interaction. These themes represent critical issues that emerge and reemerge during group interaction. According to Gibbard et al. (1974), the recurring-cycle model focuses on how group members attempt to manage anxiety in order to maintain equilibrium, deal with interpersonal boundaries, and resolve their individual concerns.

Although the recurring-cycle model addresses the limitations of the linear models, it is not the only model to consider. Probably the best group development theory is a synthesis of these models but not one that oversimplifies the complexity of group development (Gibbard et al., 1974).

From an interactive perspective, a useful group development theory must meet certain criteria. It must account for issues that occur as groups begin and conclude and that recycle as groups progress. At the same time, a useful group development theory must address how the interactive styles of group members influence the emergence of initial, concluding, and recycling issues.

CLASSIC GROUP DEVELOPMENT THEORIES

This chapter, in order to illustrate group development theories and their essential themes, presents four classic group development theories. The theories of Bion
Bion's fundamental premise was that every group behaves “as if” there are two groups present: the work group and the basic assumption group. Thus, a group will act as if it is a work group at times and at other times as if it is a basic assumption group.

The Work Group. The work group functions on a rational level to accomplish its objectives. Rioch (1975) characterized the work group as follows:

The work group takes cognizance of its purpose and can define its task. The structure of the group is there to further the attainment of the task. . . . The members of the work group cooperate as separate and discrete individuals. Each member of the group belongs to it because it is his will and his choice to see that the purpose of the group is fulfilled. He is therefore at one with the task of the group and his own interest is identified with its interest. The work group constantly tests its conclusions in a scientific spirit. It seeks for knowledge, learns from experience, and constantly questions how it may best achieve its goal. (p. 23)
Groups that act as if they are a work group are rare, although many groups, for limited periods, occasionally act this way (Rioch, 1975). Most of Bion's theory describes why groups do not act as if they are work groups.

**Basic Assumption Groups.** The term *basic assumption* refers to the irrational assumptions that serve as the basis for group members' interactions; that is, members act as if their assumptions about the conditions that exist in the group are true. These assumptions are not often shared verbally. However, by observing consistency in member behavior, leaders can identify the assumption that the group is acting on. Bion believed that group members experience three primary emotional states: dependency, fight/flight, and pairing. These emotional states categorize the basic assumptions.

The **dependency assumption group** members act as if they must have someone protect and reassure them. Members often assign leaders the ability to understand what they need without having to share their concerns and expect leaders to supply solutions. These members “deskill” themselves by acting as if they are unable to deal with their own concerns. These members are often passive and expect leaders to make their groups anxiety free. Because leaders cannot possibly meet these expectations, members become angry and disappointed. Eventually, members become angry that they have depended on the leader to take care of them.

The **fight/flight assumption group** members “cluster together as if threatened by a dangerous force. The language of the group centers around the themes of threat and the need to defend itself or escape. . . . Such groups may experience rapid alternations between themes of fear and themes of revenge” (MacKenzie, 1990, p. 9). When members act on fight/flight assumptions, leaders come under direct attack because members believe they have not adequately taken care of them. Sometimes members’ attacks are indirect. Such attacks take the form of being late or absent, storytelling, having “social” conversations, or trying to sidestep the purposes of the group (Rioch, 1975).

The group focuses on pairs of members during the **pairing assumption group.** This focus takes several forms. First, the group can focus on improving the relationship of a pair of members. This attention indicates that if this member pair could get along better, it would have some critically important effect on the group. Second, pairs develop intimate relationships that occasionally take on a sexual overtone. Third, the group develops a hopeful atmosphere, and positive feelings shared in dyads permeate interaction.

Bion’s work served as the transition from conceptualizing interaction in terms of individual dynamics to thinking about the group as a social system. His thinking also initiated a transition from practicing individual treatment techniques in a group setting to using interventions that focus on the entire group. Although Bion’s work tends to be somewhat obscure, his perspectives are helpful for understanding the dynamics of the group as a whole and issues that recur in groups.

It is important to remember that the concerns that characterize the basic assumptions will recur regardless of leaders’ effectiveness and the intentions of the group members. Bion’s most important idea is that consistency in members’ interactions is related to shared, erroneous, and usually unspoken assumptions about group interaction.
Bennis and Shepard

Bennis and Shepard’s (1956) theory describes the effects of subgroups and personalities on group interaction and development. This theory uses a linear-progressive model. It suggests that once issues are handled, they are forever resolved. It does not account for members’ experiences as the group approaches termination.

Bennis and Shepard contended that communication is the most essential concern of all groups. Without effective communication, a group cannot adequately address its conflicts, members are unlikely to benefit from participation, and members cannot overcome the issues that prevent effective group functioning. Bennis and Shepard describe two essential areas of interpersonal concern that are obstacles to effective communication: dependency and interdependence. They describe dependency and interdependence as the two major phases of group development during which individual members’ styles of coping with relationships emerge (Golembiewski & Blumberg, 1970).

Dependency describes members’ attitudes toward authority, beliefs about the use and distribution of power, and how responsibility should be assigned. Interactions indicating the presence of dependency issues include discussions about norms and ground rules, why the group should or should not be structured, members’ responsibilities, conflict over the leader’s role, and direct challenges to leaders. During interaction about dependency concerns, members can be withdrawn, aggressive, or submissive. Group development is demonstrated when members move from being concerned about authority to addressing concerns related to intimacy.

Interdependence addresses members’ attitudes and feelings toward relationships. Intimacy, or how emotionally and psychologically open members are to one another, forms the basis of interdependence issues. Interaction that depicts interdependence concerns focuses on members’ relationships.

Members’ personal styles of interaction and the extent to which they have resolved personal issues with authority and intimacy play a significant role in group development. Bennis and Shepard describe three personality types that emerge during dependence and interdependence.

The personalities emerging during the dependence phase are dependent, counterdependent, and independent. Dependents seek out authority relations. Leaders who provide structure and clear rules comfort them. In effect, dependents want leaders to take care of them. Counterdependents, on the other hand, resent authority. They challenge leaders because they do not trust authority. Outspoken counterdependents often challenge the group’s usefulness and have conflicts with assertive dependents. Independents have successfully resolved authority issues. These members are flexible in their authority relations, being submissive or rebellious as circumstances dictate. They tend to be objective in their relationships with the leaders.

During the interdependence phase of group development, overpersonal, counterpersonal, and independent personalities emerge. Overpersonals will not rest until they have achieved a high level of intimacy with others. Counterpersonals, conversely, are not interested in intimate relationships and try to avoid them. Independents have successfully resolved intimacy issues and do not compulsively seek out or avoid close relationships with other members.
These personalities have a profound influence on group development because their shared issues become themes in group interaction. Groups composed of an outspoken majority of one personality type will develop very slowly and may stall in a phase of development. For example, a group composed of individuals who have not successfully dealt with their authority concerns (counterdependents) is not likely to progress beyond authority issues. Conversely, in a group with a balanced distribution of member personalities, the group is much more likely to have interactions that can move it forward (see Table 3.1).

**Phase I: Dependence.** During the initial phase of development, members encounter issues with people in authority. Members begin group by having successfully resolved authority issues, distrusting authority, or needing the security offered by an authority who offers specific instructions on how to behave. The interplay of these personalities is the basis of interaction occurring during this phase.

**Subphase 1: Dependence-flight.** During this subphase, members struggle with the anxiety involved in a new and uncertain experience. Interactions tend to be social exchanges where members attempt to find similarities or common experiences. Usually, members look to the leaders to offer them instructions on how to interact and for specific information about the goals they should have for the group. When leaders are unable to provide answers that reduce members’ anxiety, the members have a dilemma. They face the ambiguity of not knowing exactly what they need to do and of having leaders who are either incapable or unwilling to tell them what to do. Dependent members try harder to get directions from the leaders. At the same time, counterdependents look for excuses to stage a rebellion, and independents observe, waiting to see what transpires. This subphase ends as members exhaust ways to acquire direction and approval from the leaders. Members become increasingly uncomfortable with their anxiety.

**Subphase 2: Counterdependence-flight.** Because group leaders have failed to reduce anxiety and dependents’ attempts to get direction have not succeeded, counterdependents become more outspoken. Consequently, two subgroups emerge, and the anger that was avoided during the dependence-flight subphase surfaces as de-

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**Table 3.1**

Bennis and Shepard’s Dominant Personalities (Phases and Subphases)

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pendents and counterdependents battle for control. Dependents attempt to find a way to structure the group and reduce anxiety, whereas counterdependents oppose any attempt to structure the group. This battle is accompanied by disenchantment with the leaders. Members of both sides see the leaders as ineffective or incompetent because they have not met the members' needs. Input from leaders is ignored or discounted as the conflict over control of the group continues. During this time, independents present compromise solutions to group issues and urge finding a middle ground. These attempts are fruitless, and the conflict continues.

Subphase 3: Resolution-catharsis. Conflict reaches its peak, but interaction begins to change. This subphase begins when independents who are less affected by dependency concerns begin to be heard. Dependents, who have been unsuccessful in introducing compromise solutions, now become successful mediators. Dependents are heard because dependents and counterdependents realize they cannot resolve their disputes and because the conflict has become excessively uncomfortable.

The independents' mediation initiates a transition in group interaction that allows members to look at the group's potential usefulness. When group members make this transition, they address norms, members' responsibilities, and the importance of group membership. The outcome of conflict over group control is the emergence of group cohesion. Members become aware that they are not helpless or isolated, that they are able to solve problems, and that they can successfully communicate their apprehensions.

Phase II: Interdependence. As the interdependence phase begins, members have endured conflict and resolved issues. Members now share a commitment to the group. Members enjoy “the end” of conflict and the positive feelings experienced in the group. Interaction stresses maintaining these feelings, and members begin to face their concerns about intimate relationships.

Members are in various stages of resolution over the emerging intimacy concerns. Overpersonal members feel a desperate need to establish and maintain intimacy, counterpersonals fear intimacy and wish to avoid it, and independents are comfortable with varying levels of interpersonal intimacy. During this phase, the interactions of these personalities shape group development.

Subphase 4: Enchantment-flight. This subphase begins with members enjoying the relaxed atmosphere that has emerged after a difficult period of group conflict. Many members share the attitude that everyone must be happy. This shared attitude produces norms that insist that conflict be avoided at any cost and that decisions be unanimous. Bennis and Shepard (1956) characterize the beginning of this subphase as “sweetness and light” (p. 429). As this phase continues, however, “the myth of mutual acceptance and universal harmony must be recognized for what it is” (p. 429).

Eventually, the pressure to conform to the group's norms begins to meet resistance. Members subgroup into two camps: one that urges the maintenance of harmony and the other that rebels against the demands of forced agreement. Counterpersonals challenge the “fake attempt to resolve interpersonal problems by
denying their reality” (Bennis & Shepard, 1956, p. 430). As this subphase closes, conflict over norms that demand harmony builds.

**Subphase 5: Disenchantment-fight.** At the beginning of this subphase, two subgroups represent opposing views on how intimate interaction should be. Overpersonals urge complete openness and present “a demand for unconditional love” (Bennis & Shepard, 1956, p. 430). Counterpersonals oppose intimacy and argue for more closed interpersonal boundaries.

The members of these opposing subgroups share a common apprehension about maintaining self-esteem. Counterpersonals believe they can maintain self-esteem by avoiding intimacy, and overpersonals believe that by establishing very intimate relationships, they can gain acceptance and maintain self-esteem. As members interact during this subphase, a theme emerges: “If others really knew me, they would reject me” (Bennis & Shepard, 1956, p. 431). Overpersonals believe that by requiring intimacy, they will be safe: “If we know each other completely, we couldn’t possibly hurt each other.” Counterpersonals believe that by avoiding intimacy, they will be safe: “If I don’t let you know me, you can’t reject me.”

As intimacy issues are confronted, anxiety increases. In response, members use defensive behaviors to avoid facing their fears of intimacy. These defenses include absenteeism, intellectualization, questioning the value of the group, and boredom. At the conclusion of this subphase, overpersonals and counterpersonals are involved in sustained conflict over the acceptable level of intimacy in the group.

**Subphase 6: Consensual validation.** This subphase often begins when members become aware that the conclusion of the group is approaching. Independents believe that the resolution of conflict is necessary, express confidence in the value of the group, and begin to look earnestly at their roles. The actions of the independents encourage members to confront their fears by disclosing emotions and personal reactions. The disclosing members discover that others, because of their disclosures, do not reject them as they had anticipated. Members speak about the assumptions they have made about themselves and others and how these assumptions influence their perceptions and understanding of their behaviors and those of others.

During this subphase, numerous values surface that are consistent with highly effective group functioning:

1. Members accept each other and do not attach a value to others’ characteristics.
2. Conflict over emotional issues ceases, yet conflict over tangible group issues (e.g., logistical problems, norms, and so on) is tolerated.
3. Although consensus is important, agreement is not forced. Instead, hearing divergent views is valued and encouraged.
4. Members discuss group process and personal involvement in the group without alarm.
5. Communication explores thinking, emotions, and behaviors. Because of their composition, not many groups accomplish this level of effectiveness.

The contributions of Bennis and Shepard’s theory are in the areas of group composition, crucial interpersonal concerns, and communication. The personalities de-
scribed by Bennis and Shepard offer group leaders guidelines for group composition decisions during pregroup screening. The personality characteristics of potential members in the areas of dependency and interdependence allow leaders to anticipate the communications problems a group will encounter as it deals with developmental concerns. Bennis and Shepard suggest that groups are neither good nor bad but that some groups are more effectively composed than others. When a group is poorly composed, the leader can do little to help it achieve optimal functioning.

Bennis and Shepard do not account for how members experience group termination or for recycling group issues. Despite these limitations, this theory offers leaders valuable information.

**Schutz**

Schutz’s (1966) theory of group development and interpersonal behaviors were based on extensive empirical research. The cornerstone of his theory is his conceptualizations of interpersonal needs. These concepts describe patterns of interpersonal behaviors and essential relationship variables. Although Schutz has since modified his theory, his initial conceptualizations are extremely relevant to understanding group development.

Schutz emphasized that interpersonal behaviors are directed toward meeting interpersonal needs. These needs “may be satisfied only through the attainment of a satisfactory relation with other people” (1966, p. 15). These needs were inclusion, control, and affection. Schutz contended that “inclusion, control, and affection constitute a sufficient set of areas of interpersonal behavior for the prediction and explanation of interpersonal phenomena” (1966, p. 13).

Persons have deficient, excessive, or ideal levels of need fulfillment as adults because they had varied degrees of success in learning how to meet these needs as children. Persons who have deficient, excessive, or ideal level fulfillment in one need can demonstrate a different level of need fulfillment in the other areas. For example, people can have an ideal level of affection needs, a deficient level of control needs, and an excessive level of inclusion needs.

**Inclusion: Needs and Personalities.** Inclusion involves establishing and maintaining satisfactory relationships. A satisfactory relationship involves experiencing a mutual interest between self and others and believing in the worth and significance of the self within the relationship. Inclusion needs are related to being attended to, acknowledged, and recognized. The interpersonal behaviors directed toward satisfying this need include participation, interaction, and involvement. Inclusion needs also define a desire to have an identity that separates an individual from others and to be recognized. Schutz characterizes the interpersonal behaviors of inclusion as seeking “prominence rather than dominance.” Each individual, depending on his or her experience as a child, has varying inclusion needs and associated fears. Individuals who have deficient inclusion needs are undersocials, those who have excessive inclusion needs are oversocial, and those who have ideal inclusion needs are socials.

Undersocials tend to be withdrawn and avoid participation. They attempt to maintain distance from others and guard their privacy. Schutz contended that undersocials
experience the inclusion needs of wanting to be attended to and of being regarded as
significant. However, because they fear rejection, not being paid attention to, or be-
ing seen as insignificant, they choose to not be involved with others. They avoid in-
teractions that could help them meet their needs in order to prevent their fears from
becoming a reality. Schutz depicted the underpersonals' attitude as "No one is inter-
ested in me, so I'm not going to risk being ignored. I'll stay away from people and get
along by myself" (1966, p. 26).

Oversocials experience the same fears and needs as undersocials. Instead of
avoiding interaction, however, oversocials relentlessly seek it out. Oversocials con-
front their fears of being ignored by doing everything in their power to gain others'
attention. Schutz characterizes the attitude of oversocials as "Although no one is in-
terested in me, I'll make people pay attention to me in any way I can" (1966, p. 26).
Oversocials seek opportunities to prove their worth by being involved with others.
These efforts include intensive and occasionally exhibitionistic group participation.

Socials do not experience the fears of oversocials and undersocials. Socials per-
ceive themselves as significant persons with unique identities who are worthy of at-
tention. Consequently, interactions with others do not cause socials to experience
significant anxiety. Socials feel comfortable being involved with others or spending
time alone. Their group participation varies because they are comfortable partici-
pating frequently or infrequently. Socials experience the freedom of having a wide
range of choices in interpersonal behaviors because their self-worth does not de-
pend on how others respond to them.

Control: Needs and Personalities. Control needs surface in interactions that in-
volve influencing or being influenced by others (Schutz, 1966). Control describes in-
dividuals' needs for authority and power in relationships. Control refers to the need
to influence others, whereas inclusion reflects the need to be involved with others.
Control depicts needs for "dominance," whereas inclusion describes needs for
"prominence" (Schutz, 1966). Individuals satisfy inclusion needs by being noticed
and involved, and they satisfy control needs by winning. Schutz believed that con-
trol issues are most effectively resolved when individuals share a mutual respect for
others' competence.

The extent of individuals' control needs reflects the intensity of their fears. The
fears relevant to control needs have to do with being regarded as incompetent, ir-
responsible, stupid, or unreliable. The more concerned individuals are about
others perceiving them as such, the more control issues will surface in their rela-
tionships. Schutz classified individuals with deficient control needs as abdicrats,
those with excessive control needs as autocrats, and those with ideal control needs
as democrats.

Abdicrats avoid situations that require them to act responsibly or participate in
decision making with others. Schutz described abdicrats as being submissive, gravi-
tating toward being subordinates, wanting to be relieved of obligations, and regard-
ing themselves as untrustworthy. Abdicrats fear that others will not help them when
they need help, cannot competently manage their responsibilities, and believe that
others are aware of this. Because of these beliefs, abdicrats avoid circumstances that
could demonstrate their incompetence. Abdicrats are passive-aggressive in interper-
sonal interactions because they are too fearful to confront or disagree with decisions made by others.

Autocrats also fear that they are not capable of responsible adult behaviors and that others know this. Autocrats, however, use behaviors designed to take charge and establish themselves as the most powerful persons in their relationships. Autocrats deal with their fears by seeking out every possible opportunity to prove their competence. Autocrats make decisions for others because they do not trust others to make decisions that are in their best interest. Schutz describes autocrats’ attitude as “No one thinks I can make decisions for myself, but I’ll show them. I’m going to make all the decisions for everyone always” (1966, p. 29).

Democrats have resolved power and authority issues in their relationships. Consequently, democrats believe that they are capable, responsible, and trustworthy. Democrats are not concerned about others perceiving them as helpless, stupid, or incapable. Democrats believe in their own competence and trust themselves. They perceive that others respect and trust them and believe that they are capable of making effective decisions.

**Affection: Needs and Personalities.** Affection needs involve developing satisfactory intimate interpersonal relationships that include liking, affection, and love. These needs can be met only in intimate interactions that express fondness and attraction and that lead to close relationships. Schutz contrasted affection needs with inclusion and control needs by using polarities to describe how these needs surface in relationships. Inclusion needs have to do with “in or out,” control needs with “top or bottom,” and affection needs with “near or far.”

To develop close emotional relationships, individuals must confront their innermost fears about revealing themselves to others: “If I reveal my private thoughts to another person, will that person find me acceptable, or will I be rejected?” To meet affection needs, individuals confront their apprehensions about others, perceiving them as deserving affection: “Will this person care enough about me to return my affection?”

The extent to which individuals fulfill affection needs and perform affection behaviors depends on their fears. Those who expect rejection will experience intense fears when they attempt to meet affection needs. Conversely, individuals who believe that they are lovable and do not fear rejection will not be apprehensive about meeting affection needs. Schutz classifies individuals with deficient affection needs as underpersonals, those with excessive affection needs as overpersonals, and those with ideal affection needs as personals.

Underpersonals believe that they are unlovable and unlikable and that they do not deserve the affection of others. Consequently, underpersonals avoid close emotional connections and stay emotionally distant. Because they perceive themselves as unlovable and unlikable, they do not trust others’ expressions of positive feelings toward them. Schutz described the underpersonal attitude as “I find the affection area very painful since I have been rejected; therefore I shall avoid close personal relations in the future” (1966, p. 30).

Underpersonals maintain distance by avoiding opportunities for close relationships and actively attempting to keep people away. These behaviors include being
overtly antagonistic and having superficial relationships with many people so that they will not have to get uncomfortably close to any one person. Underpersonals fear that allowing people to know them intimately would be devastating because others would only discover what makes them so unlovable. Schutz states, "As opposed to the inclusion anxiety that the self is of no value, worthless, and empty, and the control anxiety that the self is stupid and irresponsible, the affection anxiety is that the self is nasty and bad" (1966, p. 31).

Overpersonals work tirelessly to develop intimate relationships to confront the interpersonal fears of being unlovable, unlikable, and rejected. Their goal is to develop relationships that have a very personal quality. They want to be very close to as many people as possible. Schutz characterized the overpersonal attitude as "My first experiences with affection were painful, but perhaps if I try again they will turn out to be better" (1966, p. 31).

The incessant efforts of overpersonals to be liked and loved include blatant attempts to secure others' approval and making overly personal self-disclosures. Other overpersonal behaviors include manipulating others to sustain close, enmeshed relationships. As Schutz puts it, overpersonals "devour friends and subtly punish any attempts by [others] to establish other friendships" (1966, p. 31). Overpersonals are clinging and jealous.

Personals are comfortable in intimate relationships and in those that require emotional distance. They are not concerned with rejection, and they feel free to be emotionally and psychologically intimate whenever it feels right. Personals perceive themselves as lovable and as able to give and receive affection and are not excessively concerned with being liked. When others do not want to be involved in a personal relationship, it is not because they are unlovable. Rather, failed relationships are the consequence of incompatibility. Personals are self-accepting and can give and receive affection freely because they are not emotionally needy.

Schutz's Theory of Group Development. Schutz's group development theory is formulated on the premise that individuals are motivated to meet inclusion, control, and affection needs in the group context. To meet these needs, group members use necessary interpersonal behaviors. When members attempt to meet a particular need, the behaviors they use characterize group interaction and define the group's stage of development. Thus, when group members are attempting to meet inclusion needs, their inclusion behaviors characterize group interaction, and the group is in the inclusion phase.

Group development follows a predictable course, dictated by the interpersonal needs of group members. Schutz's principle of group integration described the initial progression of development. This principle stated that group members' initial interpersonal behaviors are inclusion behaviors meant to meet basic inclusion needs. Then, as group members meet inclusion needs, they begin to use control behaviors to meet control needs. Once members meet control needs, affection behaviors emerge in order to meet affection needs. Schutz proposed that interaction related to meeting inclusion, control, and affection needs recycles repeatedly over the life span of a group.
As groups conclude, the process of group integration is reversed. Schutz’s principle of group resolution describes how groups confront termination: “Prior to a group’s anticipated termination [group development] follow[s] the opposite sequence in that the predominate area of interpersonal behavior is first affection, then control, and finally inclusion” (1966, p. 168). As members of a group in the affection phase become aware of the group’s ending, they again confront control and inclusion needs; that is, members will struggle with deciding how to finish being a group and then with what it means to no longer be involved with each other (see Figure 3.1).

**Inclusion Phase.** During initial meetings, individuals are concerned about becoming group members. To address this concern, members make decisions about the extent of their involvement. These decisions range from choosing to be highly engaged to leaving. In the process of making involvement decisions, members confront their personal concerns about their identity and importance.

Group interaction during this phase concerns boundary issues (Schutz, 1973). That is, members decide whether they want to belong to the group and whether belonging to the group is safe. To reach this decision, members try to determine whether leaders are committed to their welfare and whether other members will pay attention to them and regard them as unique individuals.

Inclusion interaction is tentative and includes discussion of safe social topics. Although these discussions are irrelevant to the purposes of the group, they help members get to know each other and are unavoidable. Schutz (1973) states, “Groups not permitted this type of testing will search for some other method of obtaining the same information” (p. 52). Although all members experience some degree of inclusion concerns, oversocial and undersocial members will be especially concerned with inclusion issues.

**Control Phase.** Once members are comfortable with inclusion concerns and begin to think of themselves as a group, control issues surface. When members confront control issues, they face concerns related to their ability to influence others and to assume responsibility. Autocrats and abdicrats, in particular, confront issues that involve their fears about competence.
Once the group enters the control phase, interaction becomes more confrontational. Interaction involves conflict over issues that include how feedback should be exchanged, whether anger is appropriate, how the group should be structured, rules for attendance and interaction, the leaders’ roles, responsibility for learning, and so on. Interaction with leaders involves similar issues. Abdicrats want the leaders to have all the power and responsibility for how the group proceeds, whereas autocrats want the leaders to have none. Interaction has the purpose of sorting out how much influence, power, and responsibility members will have in the group. The control phase involves each member’s attempt to find a comfortable way to participate in interactions regarding power, responsibility, and influence (Schutz, 1966).

**Affection Phase.** After members become comfortable with control issues, they face intimacy issues. Members decide how close or distant they will be with each other, especially with one other member. Overpersonals and underpersonals are especially concerned about how lovable others perceive them to be.

Group interaction becomes progressively more emotional during the affection phase. Affection behaviors involve expressing positive feelings. This phase can also contain expressions of anger and jealousy. Members also direct affection behaviors toward leaders to determine whether the leaders like or approve of them. The prevalence of emotional expressions between pairs of members is the key to identifying this phase. Affection interactions have the objective of establishing a comfortable level of expressing and receiving emotional intimacy (see Table 3.2).

Schutz does not suggest a linear progression of developmental stages. Rather, group development characterizes members’ greatest concern at any given moment. Inclusion, control, and affection issues always exist. This suggests that as members conclude considering the concerns of one phase and enter the next phase, they can reenter a previous phase. For example, members of a group have decided that membership in the group is desirable and look forward to being together. However, as

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<th>Personality Continuum</th>
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they deal with control issues, interaction becomes heated, and members become frightened by the intensity of emotion in the group. In response, members reconsider inclusion in a group where intense emotions are expressed. The recurrence of inclusion, control, and affection concerns is confusing if group leaders expect a linear progression of developmental phases.

Group development is also heavily influenced by the interpersonal orientations of members and how assertively they try to meet their needs. A group composed of assertive autocrats, for example, will be overly concerned with control issues. Therefore, control issues will reappear over and over again, and the group will not enter the affection phase.

Group development is influenced by a group's duration. Groups meeting for extended periods are more likely to cycle and recycle through group development phases. Groups meeting for limited periods may not progress through the phases. Thus, a group composed of undersocials meeting for a brief time may never leave the inclusion phase.

Schutz's theory can assist leaders in a number of ways. First, group composition decisions can be made with an awareness of how potential members' personalities and interpersonal behaviors will influence group effectiveness. Second, knowing the combination of members' personalities allows leaders to anticipate how the group will confront developmental issues. Third, when members' interactions are conceptualized in terms of interpersonal needs, leaders have insight into issues that influence interpersonal behaviors in the group. Schutz's theory sensitizes leaders to the early needs of group members regarding inclusion, the factors that contribute to control issues that may result in leadership challenges, how affection concerns play out during the course of the group, and how termination issues will appear as the group nears conclusion.

**Tuckman**

Tuckman's (1965) group development model derived from his meta-analysis of group development research. His model defined group development concepts and the dominant themes in group development studies. Tuckman's work resulted in a linear-progressive group development model. Later, Tuckman and Jensen (1977) converted Tuckman's initial formulation to a life-cycle model by adding a termination stage.

Tuckman concluded that group members engage in activities designed to accomplish the purposes for which the group was convened. These activities are task behaviors. To accomplish a group's purposes, members interact. As a result of this interaction, patterns of interpersonal relationships emerge and change as the group progresses. Tuckman used the term group structure to define these relationship patterns.

Tuckman's initial model had four developmental stages: forming, storming, norming, and performing. Later, adjourning was added as a fifth stage (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). Tuckman believed that these stages “hold up under widely varied conditions of group composition, duration of group life, and specific group task” (1965, p. 397).
Forming. The first stage of group development witnesses members involved in testing and dependency as they acclimate to a new group. During this stage, members participate hesitantly, attempting to discover acceptable behaviors and what their relationships with other members and leaders will be like.

Structure (testing and dependency). Initially, members attempt to establish relationships with the leaders and other members in a new and unfamiliar situation. This process involves testing out interpersonal boundaries. As this stage unfolds, members learn what behaviors are appropriate by judging the reactions of leaders and other members to their behaviors. This testing-out process is accompanied by dependency. Members often want the leaders or “some powerful group member” (Tuckman, 1965, p. 386) to offer direction and support in order to lower anxiety.

Task Behaviors (orientation to the task). As group interactions begin, members try to achieve certainty about what they will be expected to do as group members and how these behaviors will accomplish the goals of the group. They also struggle to discover what information they will be required to share. During this stage, the members are seeking an understanding of the rules for group interaction.

Storming. During the second stage, members engage in conflict with the leaders and one another. This conflict involves members challenging each other and the leaders, withdrawing from interaction, questioning the usefulness of the group’s structure and task activities, and occasionally attacking the leaders directly. Members resist the demands of group involvement and want to maintain their individuality.

Structure (intragroup conflict). Interactions are characterized by competition and defensiveness. Members become polarized around issues related to the anxiety involved in developing closer relationships with each other. Tuckman observed, “There are characteristic key issues that . . . boil down to the conflict over progression into the ‘unknown’ of interpersonal relations or regression to the security of earlier dependence” (1965, p. 386).

Task Behaviors (emotional response to task demands). During this stage, members resist performing the behaviors required to accomplish group objectives. Members challenge the need to disclose personal information, the usefulness of group interactions, and the techniques and procedures used by the leaders. These challenges reflect members’ concerns about the discrepancy between their customary interpersonal behaviors and the demands of the group’s task activities. Members have emotional reactions to group demands that require making changes in their interpersonal behaviors. Commonly, leaders are the target of members’ challenges resulting from these emotional reactions. Interactions at this point have the goal of avoiding involvement and exposure.

Norming. As the third stage begins, members accept the usefulness of the group’s structure and task activities. Members increasingly accept each other despite per-
sonality differences and regard group membership as important. Members commit
to the group and to maintaining the interpersonal harmony that marks the initiation
of this stage.

**Structure (development of group cohesion and functional role relatedness).**
During this stage, the group becomes cohesive because it has become increasingly
important to its members. At this point, members view minor disagreements as a
threat to the harmony that has followed a period of conflict. Norms that suppress
conflict and encourage conformity and agreement emerge and are vigorously
enforced.

**Task Behaviors (discussing one’s self and other group members).** The overall
theme of interaction in this stage is “probing and revealing by group members at a
highly intimate level” (Tuckman, 1965, p. 390). Other related themes emerging during
this stage are “confiding . . . discussing personal problems in depth . . . exploring
the dynamics at work within the individual . . . and exploring the dynamics at
work within the group” (Tuckman, 1965, p. 390). Members become increasingly in-
timate yet careful not to confront each other.

**Performing.** The fourth stage sees the group reaching its greatest effectiveness.
Members’ task behaviors are highly productive in terms of reaching group goals.
Roles that members assume promote therapeutic progress and “constructive action”
in the group.

**Structure (functional role relatedness).** This stage marks the time when members
typically gain self-understanding and insight. Group goals are achieved, and mem-
ers’ roles achieve greater flexibility. The group has become a therapeutic environ-
ment, members are invested in the work of the group, and they are not resistant to
the therapeutic process.

**Task Behaviors (emergence of insight).** Members achieve understanding of their
personal and interpersonal issues during the fourth stage. Members develop insight
into personal concerns, achieve understanding of their interactions, and initiate ther-
apeutic change. Members willingly exchange feedback, self-disclose, confront one
another, take risks, and participate in therapeutic interactions.

**Adjourning.** In the adjourning stage, members experience separation and the ter-
nination of the group as a significant event. At the conclusion of counseling and
therapy groups, members usually have developed close emotional connections.
When termination nears, members have significant emotional reactions to the end of
the group and experience it as a significant loss.

Tuckman’s paradigm, with the addition of the adjourning stage, described
themes in group development research prior to 1977. Tuckman’s model has two cru-
cial limitations. First, it does not account for recurring issues. Second, it does not in-
clude a description of the effects of the interpersonal styles of group members on
group development.
ESSENTIAL GROUP DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

The group development theories presented in this chapter evolved from the study of various groups in a variety of settings over a time span of nearly 30 years. Interestingly, despite this diversity, these theories share concepts and developmental themes.

Group development theories offer some important foundational concepts that help leaders comprehend group interaction. These concepts include the following: Counseling and therapy groups are social systems; groups address variations of core interpersonal issues; anxiety related to core interpersonal issues is always present; conflict is inevitable, indispensable, and productive; and members join groups having had varying degrees of success in dealing with core interpersonal issues.

Counseling and Therapy Groups Are Social Systems

Relationship patterns develop as members interact (Tuckman, 1965). Over time, these relationship patterns define a group as a distinct social system, a critical part of which is the group's normative structure. This structure expresses members' tolerance for the anxiety produced by shared interpersonal concerns (Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Bion, 1961; Schutz, 1966). This means that leaders can judge the strength and nature of members' apprehensions by observing how intensely members negotiate norms and apply their sanctions. For example, when members are very intense in negotiating norms that prohibit the expression of "negative emotions," leaders can conclude that members are especially concerned about safety or very fearful of the expression of anger.

A group's emerging social structure also establishes interpersonal boundaries that define the behaviors required for membership. These negotiated boundaries define how openly members should interact and the issues they should discuss. Consequently, interpersonal boundaries reflect members' decisions about becoming included in the group. Thus, when members avoid discussing emotions, a leader can conclude that members are reluctant to be fully involved in the group.

An especially significant social systems concept is that the issues members encounter in groups are not separate from the issues members experience outside groups (Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Bion, 1961; Schutz, 1966). They are isomorphic. Isomorphy means that the interpersonal dynamics and behaviors of members in group are identical to those that members demonstrate outside group. Isomorphy also means that the concerns each member experiences are shared, to some extent, by other members. Thus, when one member struggles with intimacy, other members also struggle, and all members (even the leader) indirectly confront their intimacy concerns outside the group. More broadly, isomorphy means that counseling and therapy groups confront the same issues confronted in larger social systems and in society in general (Bion, 1961).

Groups Address Core Interpersonal Issues

Group development theory (Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Bion, 1961; Schutz, 1966; Tuckman, 1965) describes how members struggle to deal with core interpersonal is-
sues: involvement, dependency, authority, individuation, intimacy, and loss and loneliness. Variations of these core interpersonal issues emerge and recycle as long as groups remain intact (Bion, 1961; Schutz, 1966).

Two common factors influence the emergence of core interpersonal issues: how effectively members have resolved these core issues before coming to group and apprehensions related to intimacy. In groups composed of individuals who have unsuccessfully resolved a particular core issue, members will have an intense reaction when the issue emerges. Usually, the issue emerges, only to be avoided. When members avoid a core issue, it surfaces over and over again with no indication that progress is being made. Conversely, in groups where most individuals have had some success in dealing with a core issue, the issue will reemerge, but it will be addressed successfully, and the group progresses (Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Schutz, 1966).

When group interaction becomes more intimate, variations of issues that have been successfully addressed during earlier, less intimate interaction resurface. For example, when involvement is addressed during initial group meetings, members might readily accept what is required to be a group member. Later, when sharing increasingly personal information becomes a part of group interaction, members will reconsider involvement (Bion, 1961; Schutz, 1966).

Anxiety Is Always Present

Anxiety is a persistent element of group interaction. Bion (1961) stressed that group interaction seeks to maintain a homeostasis that keeps anxiety at a level members can tolerate. Even when members successfully confront a concern that creates anxiety, apprehensions remain. These apprehensions are related to the fears that subsequent interaction may demand greater intimacy or that other, more risky issues may surface. Anxiety related to core interpersonal issues is commonly related to fears associated with intimacy: rejection, abandonment, incompetence, and significance (Schutz, 1966).

Conflict and Anger Are Inevitable, Indispensable, and Productive

Conflict is associated with members’ attempts and inescapable failure to avoid anxiety. Direct and indirect expressions of anger aimed at group leaders include members reacting to leaders’ failing to provide freedom from anxiety or a group structure that provides total safety (Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Bion, 1961; Schutz, 1966; Tuckman, 1965). At the same time, members conflict and become angry with each other when they disagree over how to best avoid anxiety (Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Schutz, 1966).

Conflict and anger are indispensable if groups are to become highly productive. Conflict is productive because it exposes members’ interpersonal concerns. For example, when members conflict over the expectations of group membership, leaders can direct members to explore their inclusion needs. This intervention directs members to confront the concerns they are experiencing in the here and now. Leaders who understand that the potential for change exists whenever conflict emerges are more likely to look for opportunities to identify conflict.
Members Have Varying Degrees of Success Resolving Core Interpersonal Issues

Individuals who enter counseling and therapy groups have had varying degrees of success resolving core interpersonal issues (Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Schutz, 1966). Very few new members likely have achieved the resolution depicted by Schutz’s (1966) socials, democrats, and personals or Bennis and Shepard’s (1956) independents. It is more likely that members have developed personality patterns that reflect varying degrees of success in meeting interpersonal needs and confronting core issues in their relationships. This means that when core interpersonal issues emerge, members will react with various degrees of intensity. These reactions will have a definite impact on group functioning.

Counseling and therapy groups function effectively when members develop insight and a deeper understanding of their interactions with others (Tuckman, 1965). These outcomes are likely to occur when members communicate effectively (Bennis & Shepard, 1956). Unfortunately, groups encounter barriers to effective communication that are closely related to members’ shared core interpersonal concerns. A group composed of individuals who share the same interpersonal issue has a prearranged dominant issue and is likely to stall when that issue emerges (Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Schutz, 1966). If a group is to function effectively, it requires the presence of individuals who have, to some degree, resolved the interpersonal issue being addressed (Bennis & Shepard, 1956).

CONCLUSION

Group development can be described in a number of different ways. Despite their different descriptions, group development theories display common themes. Understanding these theories and their common themes is important because it allows leaders to anticipate and conceptualize surfacing concerns and group events. In addition, by understanding how the interactions of individual members influence group development, leaders can make informed decisions about group composition and anticipate more specific developmental issues. Decisions about group composition and more information on dealing with the impact of individual members on the group social system are addressed in later chapters.