

**BSW-125**

**Social Case Work and Social Group Work**

**Block**

**3**

**SOCIAL WORK WITH GROUP**

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**UNIT 1**

**Concept of Group**

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**UNIT 2**

**Characteristics and Significance of Groups**

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**UNIT 3**

**Group Formation: Stages of Development of Groups**

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**UNIT 4**

**Leadership in Group**

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## **BLOCK INTRODUCTION**

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The third block of the course, 'BSW-125 Social Case Work and Social Group Work' is 'Social Work with Group.' This block deals with the concept, characteristics and the significance of groups. The stages of group formation and leadership in group is also discussed in this block.

The first unit 'Concept of Group' explains the definition, meaning and characteristics of group. It will highlight the types of groups and describe the advantages and disadvantages of groups. The second unit, 'Characteristics and Significance of Groups' gives you the theoretical bases of group work. Various theories are presented which support the assumption that groups can be used to influence its members for the better. The third unit 'Group Formation: Stages of Development of Groups' describes how group work is actually done. Different phases of group work process are described so that you understand that social workers undertake group work systematically and meaningfully. The fourth and last unit 'Leadership in Group' explains leadership in the context of group and the theories related to leadership. It will throw light on various leadership styles and factors affecting group leadership. The unit also discusses leadership and decision-making and differentiates between leadership and power.

This block will give you a comprehensive understanding of the concept of group, its formation, characteristics and significance. The block will also highlight the importance of leadership in group.

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## UNIT 1: CONCEPT OF GROUP

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\* Prof. Rose Nembiakkim

### Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Definition and Meaning of Group
- 1.3 Characteristics of Group
- 1.4 Types of Group
- 1.5 Advantages and Disadvantages of Group
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 Suggested Readings
- 1.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the definition and meaning of group;
- Explain the characteristics of group;
- Understand types of groups: primary and secondary, planned and emergent; and
- Highlight the advantages and disadvantages of groups.

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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Social scientists have listed various characteristics of groups and developed theories only in the last century even though the concept of group such as families and tribes existed since time immemorial. The study of group was mainly confined within the domains of social psychology and sociology where scientists explored human behaviour, the influences of group on personal identity and the motives of joining groups. This was followed by the exploration of the

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significance of groups in social work and social action for helping individuals solve their problems and bringing about social change as a whole.

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## 1.2 DEFINITION AND MEANING OF GROUP

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We are assigned to a single group or groups from the time we are born, for example, family, gender and social status. We become a part of groups either voluntarily or involuntarily, or both. Typically, everyone belongs to many different types of groups. For example, you could be a member of a college group, sports team, friendship circle, church group, workplace, and more. Alternatively, we may be inadvertently associated with groups because of our socio-economic status such as caste or tribe, income and education. Each individual experiences being a part of a group, and it is belonging to groups that shapes our identity, experiences, perceptions and values in life among many other things. Groups are an integral part of our social lives. It may be difficult to arrive at a single, synthesised definition of group though numerous empirical knowledge exists within social work practice. In this unit, we will explore few key explanations that are frequently used in social work practice.

Groups are found in all societies. Let us first understand groups as a social unit. “A social group is a collection of more than two people who have the same social identity – they identify themselves in the same way and have the same definition of who they are, what attributes they have, and how they relate to and differ from specific outgroups” (Tajfel, 2010). Social groups are found everywhere. Groups can be made up of two or more people who relate with one another and have interpersonal relationships. Groups can be collectives of huge number of people, for example, a group of people belonging to the same religion, or smaller unit such as students who are responsible for preparing monthly school bulletin. People generally become part of a group to fulfil a common purpose, and consider interdependence and communication as useful means to meet that purpose (Lewin, 1951). A group therefore is not an aggregate of people who are independent from each other but rather a unified social unit (Bales & Cohen, 1979). An aggregate is merely a collection of people who happen to circumstantially find themselves in the same location, for example, people waiting to board a flight at the departure gate of an airport. It

is fundamental to understand groups, its typologies and the different dimensions to be able to understand and place group work within social work practice.

It is important to note that while members can greatly benefit from being in a group, it can also alternatively have undesirable influence on the members. Similarly, groups can play a positively significant role in impacting the society or it can also create problems for the society as a whole.

### **Check your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Define a social group.

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### **1.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF GROUP**

We now understand that every collection of people for a short span of time may not qualify as a group, for example, people that are in a movie theatre or waiting together for a doctor's appointment. Groups are therefore not a random collection of people but a unit that have shared purpose, perform agreed tasks, and are interdependent and relate with one another (Hare, 1976). Groups are planned and intended.

There are some key characteristics of groups that are important to know as it will help you in identifying if a collection of people are actually a group or not. Groups may have additional attributes other than what is explained here. However, this unit gives overview on the dynamics and processes involved within them.

- **Shared objectives:** Groups are essentially formed to achieve a common objective. Group comprises of two or more persons who come together to achieve a common purpose, which

otherwise is perceived difficult to fulfil individually (Theodore, 1967). Members believe being in a collective will help them achieve their purpose and hence they cooperate with one another.

- **Interpersonal communication:** One of the most fundamental criterion of a group is that members of a group regularly communicate with one another over a period of time. Persons in groups have direct interactions to have meaningful interchange. It is through interaction that members maintain their relations and influence one another. Groups have mainly two types of interactions. One is ‘Task interaction’ where communication is oriented towards planning and implementation of group activities, and the achievement of collective outcome. The second type of interaction is ‘relationship interaction’ which focuses on building and maintaining social relationships.
- **Shared identity:** Members in a group relate with one another as they may belong to the same social groups, and take the group membership as a means to promote and sustain norms, attitudes, values and beliefs they identify with. At least two or more members will acknowledge that they belong to a group and outsiders will identify them as one social unit.
- **Social interdependence:** Members in a group are interdependent. Each person’s outcome in a group is not only brought about by his/her own actions but it is largely influenced by other members of the group. This is one of the key qualifiers of a group.
- **Structure:** A group structure means there are clear assignment of roles among the members, for example, a group leader, a person responsible for disseminating information among the members. A structured group will have a code of conduct that governs them. It is very important for a group to have an agreed norm so that members operate in a purposive and systematic manner.

**Check your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) List down the characteristics of group.

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## 1.4 TYPES OF GROUP

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All of us are simultaneously members of various types of groups. We are members of the family, members of friendship groups, members of work organisations and members of fan club or a religious group. Sociologists have attempted to classify/differentiate the various types of groups as follows:

### **Voluntary and Involuntary Groups**

Voluntary groups are those we join through our own choice and effort. We may join a political party or a particular occupation. In contrast, involuntary groups are those that we are forced to join or those that we are automatically members of without choice. For example, everyone is without a choice, automatically a member of sex, age and racial groups.

Groups often fail because of their physical setting. If they are held in a hall or ward full of distractions, productive group work will not occur. You would require a room that is not cluttered up with chairs and tables and that allows for a comfortable seating arrangement. Members must be able to sit in a circle. This arrangement lets all the participants see one another and allows enough freedom of movement that members can spontaneously make physical contact.

### **Open Versus Closed Groups**

*Open groups* are characterised by changing membership. As certain members are ready to leave, new members are admitted, and the group continues. *Closed groups* typically have some time limitation, with the group meeting for a predetermined number of sessions. Generally, members are expected to remain in the group until it ends, and new members are not added.

### **Open and Closed Groups**

An open group is one in which virtually anyone can become a member. For instance, all can join the Hrithik Roshan fan club. A closed group, however, is much more difficult to join. Some exclusive clubs restrict membership so that all cannot join. Only a few elites manage to get memberships in such clubs. Similarly, the mafia (underworld) is a closed group.

### **Vertical and Horizontal Groups**

A vertical group consists of members from all walks of life, while a horizontal group consists predominantly of members from one social class. Occupational groups – of doctors or electricians for instance – are composed largely of members from the same social class. On the other hand, religious groups may have members from all classes.

### **Primary and Secondary Groups**

Primary group is one where members develop close, personal, intimate and enduring relationships. Family, neighbours and work associates are examples of such groups. Members know one another well, greatly influence each other and feel closely related. On the other hand, in secondary groups individuals act towards one another in rather impersonal, superficial and utilitarian ways.

### **Natural and Formed Groups**

Natural groups consist of members who come together in a spontaneous fashion on the basis of naturally occurring events, interpersonal attraction or the mutually perceived needs of members. Family, peer groups and street gangs are examples of natural groups. On the other hand, formed group consists of members who come together through some outside influence or intervention. These are groups that are formed for a particular purpose. Therapy groups, encounter groups, committees and teams are examples of formed groups.

The type of group that we discussed last – formed group – is of great interest to group work as the groups that we come across in social group work predominantly belong to this type of groups.

### **Formal and Informal Groups**

Formal groups are created and maintained to fulfil the needs or tasks which are related to the organisational mission. These groups are deliberately created. They are large in size. Formal groups are either permanent or temporary.

Informal groups work the other way round. They are created because of operation of social and psychological forces. For example, people in the company get together to play cricket on the weekend. It is the preference of the individual who wants to be in the group: tasks are incidental.

### **Homogeneous and Heterogeneous Groups**

The adjective homogenous comes from the Greek “homegenos”, meaning ‘of the same kind’. Homogenous groups have members who have similar academic, social and emotional levels. Whereas in a heterogeneous group, members are of varying ages, academic levels, interest, needs, etc.

### **Treatment Groups and Tasks Groups**

Treatment groups signify groups whose major purpose is to meet the socio-emotional needs of the group- meeting the members need for support, education, therapy, growth and socialisation. Treatment groups include growth groups, therapy groups and socialisation group.

Whereas task groups come in existence with a purpose of accomplishing a goal that is neither intrinsically nor immediately linked to the needs of the group member, but rather, of broader constituency.

### **Check your Progress III**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Define natural and formed group.

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## Theories of Group Development

Groups are organic, dynamic and change over a period of time. In essence, groups develop, thrive and end. Groups are a regular phenomenon in all spheres of our lives. They are a common method used in the professional field including the social work practice.

There are several theories regarding group development processes. Two theories are extensively used to explain group development, the progressive stage model and the cyclical model.

The progressive stage model is one of the most frequently cited models given by Bruce Tuckman in 1965. According to this theory there are four stages of group development, viz., forming, storming, norming and performing (Tuckman, 1965). This theory posits that group progresses successively, building from the previous stage. The stages commence from the time potential members start interacting until the group terminates. A fifth stage was later added, which is called adjourning. These stages can be applied to groups in different contexts- profession, place, purpose, demography and others.

### Stages of group development

Forming stage	Members build rapport, familiarise themselves with one another and discuss on the expected roles of the individuals and the group.
Storming stage	Group activities commence, members experience conflicts over the group tasks and face differences in personalities.
Norming stage	Members acknowledge the value each one brings to the table. There is more understanding and unity among them.
Performing stage	Members are clear about the group goal, they are motivated, uniform in their intent and work cooperatively to achieve the common goal.
Adjourning stage	Members separate as the group goal is accomplished.

Group development does not occur linearly as Tuckman suggested, rather it is cyclical. Groups may move back and forth within the stages without sequentially progressing to the next stage.

The group may not develop as planned (Bales & Cohen, 1979). Groups can have the characteristics of being cyclical as well as progressive.

Group development largely rests on the leadership and the level of engagement of the members in group activities. Working with a group or being a member of a group is not always easy. Familiarising with group development processes can enable you in planning a roadmap, identifying intervention points and in contributing to achieving groups' purpose.

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## **1.5 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF GROUP**

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### **Advantages and disadvantages of groups**

So far we have highlighted what a group is and its overarching characteristics. Groups evidently have their advantages and disadvantages. Some of the frequently encountered experiences are as follows, though you may be able to add a few more.

#### **Advantages:**

- Group provides people the platform to work together on common interests and tasks, thereby increasing productivity and performance. Team work therefore is a continually valued mechanism to achieve intended purpose in a variety of settings- workplace, education, communities and so on.
- It offers people the opportunity to build cohesiveness, share information and knowledge, and promote values. Families, religious groups, friendship circles and volunteer groups play considerable role in shaping attitudes, values and norms.
- By being in a group a person can develop interpersonal skills, build leadership qualities, enhance self-awareness and embrace the significance of interdependence, which are important elements of socialisation and beneficial to the society as a whole.
- Groups play a significant role in providing support and addressing collective as well as individual problems. We usually gain a perspective and possible solutions to our problems when it is discussed with friends, families and colleagues.
- Working with groups in certain instances may prove to be more cost-effective and time-saving than having to work with individuals. These logistical factors are helpful to social researchers when they gather information through focus group techniques.

## Disadvantages

- Though group provides an opportunity for people to pursue a shared objective, it can also stimulate interpersonal conflicts. Differences of opinion and contempt among members are a regular phenomenon when working in team and at times it can take extreme form.
- It is difficult to ascertain equal participation in a group, some members may demonstrate dominance in areas such as decision-making leading to the marginalisation of other members.
- Maintaining confidentiality in a group is an issue. Another setback related to this is when we working with a group belonging to the same community or social strata. Members may refrain from sharing information for the fear of being judged if their problems and views are opposed to popularly held norms and values of the society.
- Group's priority can override individuals' needs and concerns thus preventing them to meet their purpose.
- Groups can play an influential role in making people adopt ideas, attitudes and behaviours that may not benefit individuals and society as a whole. Studies have shown that peer pressure is one of the contributing factors to the initiation of substance abuse by young people, namely drugs, smoking and alcohol.

We need to appreciate these factors so that groups can be managed strategically to benefit all the members.

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## 1.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit, we learned about groups. Groups, which are an integral part of our social lives and can be made up of two or more people who relate with one another and have interpersonal relationships. At the same time, we also learnt that while members can greatly benefit from being in a group, it can also have undesirable influence on the members. Similarly, groups can play a positively significant role in impacting the society or it can also create problems for the society as a whole. The unit also looked at some key characteristics of groups that are important to know which would help in identifying if a collection of people are actually a group or not. Groups may have additional attributes other than what is explained, however, an attempt has been made to give an overview on the dynamics and processes involved within them. The unit also discusses

on the types of group which social work educationists, practitioners and researchers may come across and they may have to play a pivotal role in facilitating the formation of one or the other type of groups. In this unit we also learnt that the social work group development/formation has a number of phases and each phase has a number of steps where the worker and member have to carefully involve. We ended the unit by discussing about the advantages and disadvantages of group.

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## 1.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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## 1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress I

1. A social group is a collection of more than two people who have the same social identity. They identify themselves in the same way and have the same definition of who they are, what attributes they have, and how they relate to and differ from specific outgroups.

### Check Your Progress II

1. The characteristics of a group are as follows:
  - a. Shared objectives
  - b. Interpersonal communication
  - c. Shared Identity
  - d. Structure

### Check Your Progress III

- 1) Natural groups are formed spontaneously when people who are gathered circumstantially in a place, start interacting. Formed groups are intentionally formed by people either from within the group or by external people or organisations.



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## UNIT 2      CHARACTERISTICS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF GROUPS

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\* Mr. Raja Samuel

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- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Definition of Groups
- 2.3 Factors of Group Formation
- 2.4 Theories Underlying Group Work Practice
- 2.5 Benefits of Groups
- 2.6 Influence of Groups on Personality Development
- 2.7 Types of Group Work Groups
- 2.8 Group Logistics
- 2.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.10 Key Words
- 2.11 Suggested Readings
- 2.12 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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The purpose of this unit is to provide you with an understanding of groups. It is aimed at explaining to you the meaning of groups and its significance for individuals. After reading this unit you should be able to:

- identify the key characteristics of groups;
- enumerate the various types of groups;
- discuss factors of group formation;
- understand theories of group formation;
- list the benefits individuals gain from groups;

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- explain the impact of groups on personality development;
- enumerate the various types of treatment and task groups in social group work;  
and
- list the essential aspects in group work logistics.

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## **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

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All day long we interact first in one group and then in another. We live in a dwelling as part of a group, we learn in groups contained in the same classroom, we work in groups, we interact with friends in groups, and we spend much of our leisure time in groups. Our family life, our leisure time, our friendships, and our careers are all filled with groups. In fact, if a person from outer space conducted a study of the people of earth, group membership would probably be the dominant characteristic noted. We are born into a group called the family, and we would not survive the first few minutes, the first few weeks, or even the first few years of our lives without membership in this group. It is within our family and peer groups that we are socialised into ways of behaving and thinking, educated, and taught to have certain perspectives on ourselves and our world. Our personal identity is derived from the way in which we are perceived and treated by other members of our groups. We learn, work, and play in groups. As humans we have an inherent social nature. Our life is filled with groups from the moment of our birth to the moment of our death. All these make groups one of the most important factors in our lives. In business, government, and the military there is great interest in improving the productivity of groups. There is great concern in our society about strengthening the family. Educators are striving to better understand how the classroom functions as a group. Drug abuse, delinquency and crime, and mental illness are all being treated through group procedures, and there is continued concern with making those procedures more effective. As the effectiveness of groups goes, our quality of life goes. The more effective our family, career, and educational groups, the higher the quality of our lives.

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## **2.2 DEFINITION OF GROUPS**

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Not every collection of people can be considered a group. The Oxford English Dictionary defines **group** as a number of persons or things regarded as forming a unit on account of any kind of mutual or common relation or classified together on account of a common degree of similarity. There are three criteria suggested by this definition to call a group as a group:

- a) Number of persons – more than one
- b) Mutual or common relation
- c) Similarity

Groups may be contrasted with aggregates. An aggregate is a collection of individuals who are present at the same time and place but do not form a unit or have a common degree of similarity. Individuals standing on a street corner, the members of an audience at a music programme are aggregates, not groups.

While the Oxford definition has captured the basic essence of a group, different social scientists have put forward their own views on what is a group with emphasis on the various aspects of a group. We can see some of the definitions below.

### **Interpersonal Interaction**

A group may be defined as a collection of individuals who are interacting with one another. According to this definition, the individuals are not a group unless they are interacting with one another. Three psychologists who have defined group in this way are Bonner, Stogdill, and Homans. They stress that the primary defining characteristic of a group is interpersonal interaction. It is questionable that a group can exist without its members interacting with one another.

### **Perceptions of Membership**

A group may be defined as a social unit consisting of two or more persons who perceive themselves as belonging to a group. According to this definition, the persons are not a group unless they perceive themselves to be part of a group. Two psychologists who have defined

group in this way are Bales and Smith. They stress that the primary defining characteristic of a group is that the members perceive themselves to be part of a group. It is questionable that a group could exist without its members being aware that they are members of a group.

### **Interdependency**

Group may be defined as a collection of individuals who are interdependent. According to this definition, the individuals are not a group unless an event that affects one of them affects all of them. Four psychologists who have defined group in this way are Cartright and Zander, Fiedler, and Lewin. These authors stress that the primary defining characteristic of a group is that the members are interdependent in some way. It is questionable whether a group could exist without its members being interdependent.

### **Goals**

Group may be defined as a collection of individuals who join together to achieve a goal. According to this definition, the individuals are not a group unless they are trying to achieve a mutual goal. Deutsch & Freeman stress that the primary defining characteristic of a group is the craving of its members to achieve a mutual goal. It is questionable whether a group would exist unless there was a mutual goal that its members were trying to achieve.

### **Motivation**

Group may be defined as a collection of individuals who are all trying to satisfy some personal need through their joint association. According to this definition, the individuals are not a group unless they are motivated by some personal reason to be part of a group. Two psychologists who have defined group in this way are Bass and Cattell. They stress that the primary defining characteristic of a group is that its members belong to the group in order to obtain needed rewards or to satisfy other personal needs. It is questionable that a group could exist without its member needs being satisfied by their membership.

## **Structured Relationships**

A group may be defined as a collection of individuals whose interactions are structured by a set of roles and norms. According to this definition, the individuals are not a group unless their interactions are structured by a set of role definitions and norms. Two sets of psychologists who have defined group in this way are McDavid and Harari and Shel and Sherif.

They say that the primary defining characteristic of a group is that the interaction of its members is structured by role definitions and norms. It is doubtful whether a group could exist unless role definitions and norms structure the interaction of its members.

## **Mutual Influence**

A group may be defined as a collection of individuals who influence each other. According to this definition, the individuals are not a group unless they are affecting and being affected by each other and therefore, the primary defining characteristic of a group is interpersonal influence. Shaw defined group in this way.

One solution to the profusion of definitions is to combine them all into one definition. A small group may be defined as two or more individuals who:

- a) pursue common goals,
- b) are interdependent,
- c) interact with each other,
- d) share norms concerning matters of common interest and participate in a system of interlocking roles,
- e) influence each other,
- f) find the group rewarding, and
- g) define themselves and are defined by others as belonging to the group.

Not all these characteristics are equally important and although it is impossible to gain consensus among social scientists as to which characteristics are most important we can arrive at a definition of group for the purpose of group work as follows.

*A group is two or more individuals in face to face interaction, each aware of positive interdependence as they strive to achieve mutual goals, each aware of his or her membership in the group, and each aware of the others who belong to the group.*

### **Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Indicate which collections of people listed below are group and which ones are aggregates:

- The spectators at a college football game
- All the students in a group work class
- Individuals waiting in silence at the bus stop
- The Hrithik Roshan fan club
- All men in Mumbai who have brown eyes
- A committee deciding the best way to handle a production problem
- All people who drive Maruti cars
- A family consisting of father, mother and two children having dinner in a hotel.

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## **2.3 FACTORS OF GROUP FORMATION**

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We can identify four major factors that influence our decision to join and remain in a wide variety of groups: attraction to members of the group; the activities, goals, or the task of the group; affiliating with the people in the group; and meeting needs or goals lying outside the group.

Attraction to members of the group grows out of proximity and frequency of interaction. (Consider your own experience of friendship groups that are largely determined by who is available for interaction: your neighbours, classmates, roommates, and so on). However, we must remember that proximity creates only the potential for, attraction; other factors usually come into play when actually establishing a relationship. The power of similarity, especially attitudinal similarity, appears to be as strong in group formation as in interpersonal attraction.

The task of a group, as experienced in its activities and goals is often an important reason for joining. You join a photography club because you enjoy taking pictures and discussing that activity with others. You join a protest group against higher tuition fees because you cannot afford to pay more. In these examples, you are gaining rewards directly through group membership. The application of social exchange theory to group formation predicts that we join and remain in groups when the rewards for doing so outweigh the costs, thus yielding profits.

The third general factor of group formation is our desire to affiliate with the people in that group. We satisfy our need for affiliation through interacting with people, just as we meet our need for achievement through the activities and goals of the group. Whether we affiliate for social comparison, or to reduce anxiety, or to satisfy an innate craving, it is clear that the group is a powerful forum for meeting our basic social needs and a strong influence on our behaviour.

Group membership may help us meet needs that lie outside the group – thus, group membership may be a stepping stone to achieve an external goal, rather than a source of direct satisfaction. A college professor may regularly attend meetings of a professional association to enhance the probability of promotion. A candidate for political office may join a host of community organisations to enhance his or her chances for election.

When we consider attraction to a group, we must also consider the characteristics of the group itself. Several attributes of groups generally make them more attractive to prospective members and thus contribute to group formation.

- The more prestige a group can offer a member, the more attractive the group. Members who have positions of higher authority and prestige are usually most attracted to remain in the group.
- Co-operative relationships and joint rewards heighten the attractiveness of a group, whereas individual striving and competition detract from it.
- The degree of positive interaction among members directly affects attractiveness since it increases the range of personal and social needs being met.
- The size of the group affects its attraction. Smaller groups generally offer more possibility for interaction, for sharing similarities, and for meeting individual needs, and therefore tend to be more attractive.
- Positive relations with other groups may add to the prestige of the group and make it more attractive.
- Nothing succeeds like success. Groups that are perceived as meeting their goals effectively usually appear to be more attractive.

### **Plausible Hypothesis about Group Formation**

From the various factors influencing group formation the following hypothesis can be confidently stated:

- 1) People join groups in order to satisfy some individual need.
- 2) Proximity, contact and interaction provide an opportunity for individuals to discover the need satisfactions that can be attained through affiliation with others.
- 3) Interpersonal attraction is a positive function of physical attractiveness, attitudinal similarity, similarity in personality, economic similarity, racial similarity, perceived ability of the other person (his or her success or failure) and need compatibility.
- 4) An individual will join a group if he or she finds the activities of the group attractive or rewarding.
- 5) An individual will join a group if he or she values the goals of the group.
- 6) There exists a need for affiliation which renders group membership rewarding.
- 7) An individual will join a group if he or she perceives it to be instrumental in satisfying needs outside the group.



- 8) Group development follows a consistent pattern, which may be characterised as orientation-evaluation-control.

### **Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What factors influence the formation of groups?

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## **2.4 THEORIES UNDERLYING GROUP WORK PRACTICE**

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From knowledge about small groups accumulated over the years in laboratory and natural settings, investigators of group phenomena began to develop comprehensive theories to explain group functioning. An enormous variety of these theories exist. This section examines five of the most important theories: systems theory, psychodynamic theory, learning theory, field theory and social exchange theory. An understanding of these theories is important to place in the appropriate context the group processes and human behaviour in groups experienced by you when you do group work.

### **Systems Theory**

Systems theory attempts to understand the group as a system of interacting elements. It is probably the most widely used and broadly applied theory of group functioning. According to this theory, groups are social systems with several interdependent members attempting to

maintain order and a stable equilibrium while they function as a unified whole. Groups are constantly facing changing demands in their quest to attain goals and to maintain a stable equilibrium. Groups must mobilise their resources and act to meet changing demands if they are to survive. According to Parsons, Bales and Shils (1953), there are four major functional tasks for systems such as a group: 1) integration – ensuring that members of groups fit together; 2) adaptation – ensuring that groups change to cope with the demands of their environment; 3) pattern maintenance – ensuring that groups define and sustain their basic purposes, identities and procedures; and 4) goal attainment – ensuring that groups pursue and accomplish their tasks. Groups must accomplish these four functional tasks to remain in equilibrium. The likelihood that a group will survive depends on the demands of the environment, the extent to which members identify with group goals, and the degree to which members believe goals are attainable. By overcoming obstacles and successfully handling the functional tasks confronting them, groups strive to remain in a state of equilibrium.

This theory also states that groups are in constant interaction with their environments. They occupy an ecological niche. Homans suggests that groups have an internal system and an external system. The external system represents a group's way of handling the adaptive problems that result from its relationship with its social and physical environment. The internal system consists of the patterns of activities, interactions, and norms occurring within the group as it attempts to function. Concepts derived from the various views of systems theory that are particularly relevant for group workers include the following:

- The existence of properties of the group as a whole that arise from the interactions of individual group members.
- The powerful effects of group forces on member's behaviour.
- The struggle of groups to maintain themselves as entities when confronted with conflicts.
- The awareness that groups must relate to an external environment as well as attend to their internal functioning.
- The idea that groups are in a constant state of becoming, developing, and changing, which influence their equilibrium and continued existence.
- The notion that groups have a developmental life cycle.

## **Psychodynamic Theory**

Psychodynamic theory has had an important influence on group work practice. In his work *Group Psychology and the Analysis of Ego*, Freud (1922) set forth his theoretical formulations about groups and their influence on human behaviour. According to psychodynamic theory, group members act out in the group unresolved conflicts from early life experiences. In many ways, the group becomes a re-enactment of the family situation. Freud describes the group leader as the all-powerful father figure who holds the reins of power/authority over group members. Group members identify with the group leader as the 'ego-ideal'. Members form transference reactions to the group leader and to each other on the basis of their early life experiences. Thus, the interactions that occur in the group reflect the personality structures and defense mechanisms that members began to develop early in life.

The group leader uses transference and counter transference reactions to help members work through unresolved conflicts by exploring past behaviour patterns and linking these patterns to current behaviours. The group leader might, for example, interpret the behaviour of two group members who are struggling for the leader's attention as unresolved sibling rivalry. When interpretations made by the group worker are timed appropriately, members gain insight into their own behaviour. According to the psychodynamic theory, insight is the essential ingredient in modifying and changing behaviour patterns inside and outside the group.

More recent conceptions of psychodynamic group treatment have adapted and modified classical psychodynamic theory to include a greater emphasis on the here-and-now experiences of group interaction. This is useful in ensuring that members deal with issues of immediate concern to them. From an analysis of the immediate behaviour patterns in the microcosm of the group, the leader can help members reconstruct unresolved childhood conflicts and have corrective emotional experiences. Through direct, mutual, interpersonal communications, members build interpersonal skills, adaptive capacities, and ego-strength, as well as gain insight into their behaviour. The cohesiveness of the group encourages members to reveal intimate details about

their personal lives and to describe and act out their conflicts in a safe and supportive environment.

## **Learning Theory**

The primary focus of learning theory is on the behaviour of individuals rather than on the behaviour of groups. Thus, learning theory has generally ignored the importance of group dynamics. However, learning theory has had an important influence on current methods of group work practice. The emphasis on clear and specific goal setting, contracting, the influence of the environment on the group and its members, step-by-step treatment planning, measurable treatment outcomes and evaluation can be traced to the influence of learning theory.

According to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), the behaviour of group members can be explained by one of three methods of learning. In the classical approach to learning theory, behaviour becomes associated with a stimulus. For example, a worker responds by making a negative verbal comment each time a member turns and speaks to another member while the worker or other group members are speaking. After several times, the mere stimulus of the member's turning, without speaking, will be enough to cue the worker to respond with a negative verbal comment. Another theory of learning is called operant conditioning. In this paradigm, the behaviours of the group members and the worker are governed by the consequences of their actions. Thus, if member A acts in a certain way and member B reacts positively, member A is likely to continue the behaviour. In the group, the worker might use praise to increase member-to-member communications and negative verbal comments to decrease member-to-leader communications. To help a member with a problem he or she has experienced in the outside environment, such as being overweight, the group leader might ask the member to develop a plan that specifies self-imposed rewards for behaviour that decreases caloric intake and self-imposed sanctions for behaviour that increases caloric intake.

Bandura (1977) has developed a third learning paradigm called social learning theory. According to Bandura, most learning takes place through observation and vicarious reinforcement or punishment. For example, when a group member is praised for a specific behaviour, that group

member and other group members reproduce the behaviour later, hoping to receive similar praise. When a group member who performs a specific behaviour is ignored or punished by social sanctions, other group members learn not to behave in that manner because such behaviour results in a negative outcome.

### **Field Theory**

Kurt Lewin conducted numerous experiments on the forces that account for behaviour in small groups. According to Lewin's field theory, 'a group has a life space, it occupies a position relative to other objects in space, it is oriented towards goals, it locomotes in pursuit of these goals, and it may encounter barriers in the process of locomotion'. The unique contribution of field theory is that it views the group as a gestalt, that is, an evolving entity of opposing forces that act to hold members in the group and to move the group along in its quest for goal achievement. In developing field theory, Lewin introduced several concepts to aid in understanding the forces at work in group. Among these are : 1) roles, which refer to status, rights, and duties of group members; 2) norms, which are rules governing the behaviour of group members; 3) power, which is the ability of members to influence one another; 4) cohesion, which is the amount of attraction the members of the group feel for one another and for the group; 5) consensus, which is the degree of agreement regarding goals and other group phenomena; and 6) valence, which is the potency of goals and objects in the life space of groups.

Relying on one principle of this theory that suggests individuals will not change their behaviour unless they see their behaviour and attitudes as others see them, the T-group experience attempts to provide participants with extensive feedback about their own behaviour. Members are confronted with the effects of their own behaviour on other group members and on the group worker. Role plays, simulations, and other experiential program activities are often used to illustrate how group processes develop and how they affect members.

### **Social Exchange Theory**

Social exchange theory focuses on the behaviour of individual group members. The theory has its origin in animal psychology, economic analysis and game theory. Social exchange theorists suggest that when people interact in groups, each attempts to behave in a way that will maximise rewards and minimise punishments. Group members initiate interactions because the social exchanges provide them with something of value, such as approval. According to social exchange theorists, because nothing is gained ordinarily unless something is given in return, there is an exchange implied in all human relationships.

In social exchange theory, group behaviour is analysed by observing how individual members seek rewards while dealing with the sustained social interaction occurring in a group. For an individual in a group, the decision to express a given behaviour is based on a comparison of the rewards and punishments that are expected to be derived from the behaviour. Group members act to increase positive consequences and decrease negative consequences. Social exchange theory also focuses on the way members influence one another during social interactions. The result of any social exchange is based on the amount of social power and the amount of social dependence in a particular interaction.

Guided group interaction and positive peer culture are two specialised group work methods that rely heavily on principles from social exchange theory. They are frequently used with delinquent adolescents in residential and institutional settings. In both approaches, structured groups are used to confront, challenge, and eliminate antisocial peer group norms and to replace them with pro-social norms through guided peer-group interaction.

The importance of groups for humans has led a number of social scientists to perceive groups as the salvation or the bane for our species. To some social scientists groups are the basis for everything that is good in our lives. For other social scientists groups are destructive influences in our lives. Both views are oversimplified. Groups can have constructive or destructive effects depending on how they are used.

<b>Check Your Progress III</b>
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**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the salient features of System theory?

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2) What are the important aspects of psychodynamic theory?

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## 2.5 BENEFITS OF GROUPS

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1) Under most conditions, the productivity of groups is higher than the productivity of individuals working alone. You may have seen this happening in most companies and even in small-scale industries where more numbers of a particular product is made by a group effort rather than an individual effort. You would have also seen this in games involving teams where the chance of hitting a goal is higher when they work towards it as a team rather than as individual players.

2) Groups make more effective decisions and solve problems more effectively than individuals working alone. This is the reason why we have committees in organisations. It has been proved by social scientists and management experts that better decisions are arrived at by a group of persons working at the problem rather than an individual who is trying to solve the problem on his/her own. When problems are discussed in groups there

is greater clarification of the problem. Similarly, a variety of solutions are suggested by group members out of which the best and most suitable solution emerges.

- 3) It is through group memberships that we learn the values of altruism, kindness, consideration for others, responsibility and so forth. We are born in a primary group called family, which ingrains in us a wide range of human values. We learn to be kind to each other in the family. In our friendship groups we learn to be considerate to others and in our workplace we learn to be responsible. Thus, all the groups we are in teach us a variety of human values.
- 4) The quality of emotional life in terms of friendship, love, excitement, joy, fulfillment and achievement is greater for members of groups than for individuals acting alone. A person who does not have any relationship with others will not be able to experience most of the emotions. Family provides the experience of love while friendship groups provide excitement. The office where we work may provide us with fulfillment and also a sense of achievement.
- 5) The quality of everyday life is greater in groups because of the advantages of specialisation and division of labour. Our material standard of living, for example – our housing, food, clothing, transportation, entertainment, etc., – would not be possible without the help of others and unless we interact with them.
- 6) Conflicts are managed more productively in groups. Without group standards, social values and laws, civilization would be impossible. Groups normally establish standards or norms for its members to function effectively. Without these norms, which generally reflect societal norms, there would be confusion. Group norms exert considerable influence over individual members and keep them under control.
- 7) A person's identity, self-esteem and social competencies are shaped by the groups to which he/she belongs. If you are asked a question, 'who are you?', you will immediately say 'I am a student', which means you are part of the students' group which provides you



with an identity. Similarly, you may say you are the son/daughter of a certain person or the friend of a certain person or a manager in a particular organisation. Thus, being a member of different kinds of groups provide you with identity. Groups also help develop the self-esteem of its members by being very supportive. Friendship groups in particular provide you with a lot of emotional support and understanding that builds up your self-esteem. You can experiment with different kinds of behaviour in a friendship group without the fear of rejection.

- 8) Without co-operation, social organisation and groups of various kinds, human beings would not survive. Humans have a basic social nature and our survival and evolution are the results of the effectiveness of our groups.

While groups provide a lot of benefits, social scientists have also pointed out aspects of groups that are not very constructive.

One of the important points they have mentioned is that, people in groups are more likely to take greater risks than they would alone. Groups tend to take more extreme positions and indulge in more extreme behaviour than individuals. In large groups individuals can become anonymous and therefore, feel freer to engage in rowdy, shocking and illegal behaviour. When one member engages in impulsive and antisocial behaviour, others may do likewise. Another negative aspect of groups pointed out is that groups often influence their members to conform. The identity of the individual can be threatened if conformity is too extreme. Social scientists also point out that sometimes group affiliations become so strong that group members treat non-members and other groups in impersonal ways. Intense grouping behaviour leads to several conflicts in the society. However, a correct understanding of groups and its proper application will help us reap the immense benefits from using groups. Experiments conducted by social scientists have proved time and again the strengths of using groups for the development of the individual and society. That is the reason why an understanding of groups is crucial to the practice of group work. In the context of group work, groups contribute immensely to the personality development of individuals.

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## 2.6 INFLUENCE OF GROUPS ON PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

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- a) The formation of proper attitudes that are crucial to personality of an individual takes place through groups. It is the attitude that guides every action of human- beings. Groups provide opportunities for individuals to expose themselves to a variety of situations that shape their attitudes.
- b) Groups also change the levels of aspiration that individuals have. It is well known that individuals reach higher goals if their aspiration level is also high. Individuals constantly check their aspiration level with those of others in the group and change it if theirs is at a lower level. For instance, candidates aspiring for civil services join IAS study circles where they meet other IAS aspirants and get inspired by their hard work and perseverance. Thus, they are able to set higher goals for themselves after joining the group than when they would have acted individually.
- c) Individual patterns of living, working and life pursuits also determine one's personality. These patterns could also be modified by participation in groups. Individual's hobbies are greatly influenced by groups. Similarly in work life, how a person manages time and how he/she responds to stress would be greatly influenced by the group he/she is in. Groups also influence one's mission in life. We see a lot of individuals who join groups to serve society in different ways. Whether an individual becomes self-serving and materialistic or altruistic may greatly depend on the group he/she belongs to.
- d) Groups help individuals gain a perception of one's self and his/her role in society. The constant feedback an individual gets from other group members helps build the self-image of one's self. One can understand the type of personality he/ she has with the help of groups. Individuals can also determine what their role is based on the feedback given by others.
- e) Groups provide immense psychological support and help individuals express both positively and negatively. One of the key determinants of personality development is the psychological support required by the individual relying on which he/she can experiment

with behaviour as well as express his/ her ideas, opinion and feelings freely without the fear of rejection. Groups provide ample opportunities for this, leading to personality development.

### **Check Your Progress IV**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Write any five benefits that you can get from groups.

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## **2.7 TYPES OF GROUP WORK GROUPS**

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Groups for the purpose of group work are generally classified into two types: treatment and task groups. They are classified according to their primary purpose.

### **1. Treatment Groups**

Five primary purposes of treatment groups are: support, education, growth, therapy and socialisation.

- ***Support Groups***

Support groups can be distinguished from other groups using supportive intervention strategies by their primary goals: to foster mutual aid, to help members cope with stressful life events, and to revitalise and enhance members' coping abilities so that they can effectively adapt to and cope with future stressful life events. Examples of support groups include the following:

- A group of children meeting at school to discuss the effects of deaths in their families on their lives.
- A group of people diagnosed with cancer, and their families, discussing the effects of the disease and how to cope with it.
- A group of recently discharged psychiatric patients discussing their adjustment to community living.

Leadership of support groups is characterised by a facilitative approach that emphasises helping members share their collective experiences in coping with a stressful event. The group worker helps members share their experiences and empathically respond to each other. Simply recounting events, ventilating feelings, and reflecting on efforts to cope can promote self-understanding and help overcome loneliness, isolation and despair. A major role of the worker is to facilitate hope in the future and motivate members to improve coping skills through self-help and mutual aid. Strong emotional bonds often develop quickly in support groups because of member's shared experiences. Emotional bonding may also occur because members are stigmatised by the larger community and find comfort and power in their association with each other.

### ***Educational Groups***

The primary purpose of educational groups is to help members learn new information and skills. Educational groups are used in a variety of settings, including treatment agencies, schools, nursing homes, correctional institutions and hospitals. Examples of educational groups include the following:

- A group of women in slums who want to know about reproductive and child health.
- A group of parents who are going to adopt children.
- A group of NGO leaders who want to be more effective.

All educational groups are aimed at increasing members' information or skills. Most groups routinely involve presentations of information and knowledge by experts. They also often

include opportunities for group discussion to foster learning. When leading educational groups, workers concentrate both on the individual learner and the group as a whole as vehicles for learning, reinforcement, and discussion. Also, workers consider each members' knowledge of the subject matter and level of skills and experiences so that members derive utmost benefit from the learning process.

- ***Growth Groups***

Growth-oriented groups offer opportunities for members to become aware of, expand, and change their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour regarding themselves and others. The group is used as a vehicle to develop members' capabilities to the fullest. Growth groups focus on promoting socio-emotional health rather than remediating socio-emotional illness. Examples of growth groups include the following:

- A group for newly married couples.
- A value clarification group for youth.
- A consciousness raising group for Rotary club members.

Growth groups generally stress self-improvement and the potential of human beings to live a full and rewarding life, especially through improved relationship with others. They provide a supportive atmosphere in which individuals can gain insights, experiment with new behaviours, get feedback and grow as human beings. The bond in growth groups stems from members' commitment to help one another develop and maximise their potentials. When composing growth groups, workers often select members who have diverse backgrounds and the potential to enrich and broaden each others' experiences. Communication in growth groups is member-centered and highly interactive.

- ***Therapy Groups***

Therapy groups help members change their behaviour, cope with personal problems or rehabilitate themselves after physical, psychological or social trauma. Examples of therapy groups include the following:

- A psychotherapy group for outpatients at a community mental health centre.
- A group sponsored by an NGO for people who want to stop smoking.
- A group for children who are first time offenders.

In therapy groups, members come together to solve their problems. The group leader is often viewed as an expert, an authority figure and a change agent. Members' problems are assessed and treatment goals are developed with the help of the worker. Although the group has a common purpose, each member may have a different problem with different symptoms. Therefore, to achieve individual goals, the worker often focuses on one member at a time. The level of member's self-disclosure is usually quite high.

- ***Socialisation Groups***

Socialisation groups help members learn social skills and socially accepted behaviour patterns so that they can function effectively in the community. Socialisation groups frequently use program activities such as games, role plays or outings to help members accomplish individual goals. Examples of socialisation groups include the following:

- A youth group in Nehru Yuvak Kendra.
- A social club for outpatients of a psychiatry centre.
- A group for children from poor and disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

There are at least three common forms of socialisation groups: social skills groups, governance groups and recreation groups. Some social skills groups such as assertiveness training groups are formed for adults who wish to improve their existing skills. Social skills groups can be particularly useful for individuals who are unable or unwilling to communicate effectively and for those who have difficulty engaging in satisfying social relationships. Young children, shy adolescents and mildly retarded adults are examples of people who can benefit from such groups. Program activities can help draw out these types of group members by helping them form meaningful relationships and learn social skills. Governance groups are often found in residential settings such as nursing homes, psychiatric hospitals, correctional facilities and residential

treatment centres. The purpose of these groups is to involve residents in the daily governance of the institution. Through their participation in the governance process, members learn advocacy, communication, conflict resolution and empowerment skills. They also learn to share with others, take responsibility for their actions, and participate in decision making processes. Recreational groups are particularly important for working with children, adolescents and older adults in neighbourhood centres. They can help members learn community values and accepted forms of behaviour, develop interpersonal skills and feel a sense of belongingness. In addition, recreational groups help members develop confidence in their ability to function as a part of a group and to function in other social situations.

### **Task Groups**

Task groups are common in most agencies and organisations. They are used to find solutions to organisational problems, to generate new ideas and to make decisions. Task groups can have three primary purposes: meeting client needs, meeting organisational needs and meeting community needs.

### **II. Teams**

Team members coordinate their efforts and work together on behalf of a particular client group. Examples of teams include the following:

- A group of workers in charge of a particular department in a company.
- A group of professionals who work in psychiatric hospitals.

The functioning of the team is the responsibility of the team leader. Team leaders are often appointed by an administrator in the organisation. The team leader is a facilitator and coordinator for the group and is accountable to the organisation for the actions of the team. The team leader is responsible for conducting meetings, motivating team members, coordinating individual efforts and ensuring team functioning. Members are bonded by a team spirit that assists them in their work as a group rather than being a collection of individuals representing different concerns and professional agendas.

### ***Committees***

The most common type of task group is the committee. A committee is made up of people who are appointed or elected to the group. Their task is to accomplish a task delegated to the committee from a higher authority. Examples of committees include the following:

- A group of students in charge of a rural camp for the college.
- A group of employees assigned the task of studying and recommending changes in the agency's personnel policies.

Although members are expected to share their personal views during deliberations, the level of self-disclosure in committees is low. Most committees tend to follow a standard set of procedures. It is useful for each meeting to have an agenda so that committee members can follow the activity of the group and know what to expect during the rest of the meeting. The chairperson is responsible for seeing that the agenda and the formalised procedures are carried out.

### ***Social Action Groups***

Social action groups empower members to engage in collective action and planned change efforts to alter some aspect of the social or physical environment. Social action groups serve the common good of both members and non-members. Examples of social action groups include the following:

- A tenant's group seeking support for a playground in their housing complex.
- A group of women in poor neighbourhoods working to improve water supply in their locality.

A worker involved in a social action group can assume one of many leadership roles, depending on the nature of the change effort and the needs of the group. A worker assumes an enabler role to help the group acquire information or resources, determine priorities and procedures and plan a strategy for action. The bond that holds members of action groups together is a shared perception of injustice, inequity, and a need for a change in the current social structure.



Communication patterns vary with the circumstances of the group. The worker helps the group develop open communication patterns so that all members have a chance to become involved. The worker also helps the group establish communication links with its environment.

**Check Your Progress V**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Based on your understanding of task and treatment groups, list out the differences you are able to point out between the two.

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## 2.8 GROUP LOGISTICS

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### Group Composition

Whether a group should have a homogeneous membership (members from similar age-groups, sex and socio-economic background) or a heterogeneous one depends on the group's goals. In general, for a specific target population with given needs, a group composed entirely of members of that population is more appropriate than a heterogeneous group. Consider a group composed entirely of elderly people. It can focus exclusively on the specific problems that characterise their developmental period, such as loneliness, isolation, lack of meaning, rejection, deterioration of the body, and so forth. This similarity of the members can lead to a great degree of cohesion, which in turn allows for an open and intense exploration of their life crises. Members can express feelings that have been kept private, and their life circumstances can give them a bond with one another. Similarly self-help groups for women also benefit greatly from the homogeneity of the composition of their group. They are able to pursue the common goal of credit management or self-development in a united fashion.

Sometimes a microcosm of the outside social structure is desired, and in that case a heterogeneous group is best. Personal-growth groups and certain therapy groups tend to be heterogeneous. Members can experiment with new behaviour and develop interpersonal skills with the help of feedback from a rich variety of people in an environment that represents everyday reality.

### **Group Size**

What is the desirable size for a group? The answer depends on several factors: age of clients, experience of the leader, type of group, and problems to be explored. For instance, a group composed of elementary school children might be kept at 4 to 6, whereas a group of adolescents might be made up of 8 to 12 members. For a weekly ongoing group of adults, about 10 to 12 people with one leader may be ideal. A group of this size is big enough to give ample opportunity for interaction and small enough for everyone to be involved and to feel a sense of “group.”

### **Frequency and Duration of Meetings**

How often should a group meet? For how long? Should a group meet twice weekly for 1-hour sessions? Or is 1 to 2 hours once a week preferable? With children and adolescents, it may be better to meet more frequently and for a shorter period to suit their attention span. If the group is taking place in a school setting, the meeting times can correspond to regularly scheduled class periods. For groups of college students or relatively well functioning adults, a 2-hour weekly session might be preferable. This 2-hour period is long enough to allow some intensive work yet not so long that fatigue sets in. You can choose any frequency and duration that suit your style of leadership and the type of people in your group. For an in-patient group in a mental health centre, it is desirable to meet on a daily basis for 45 minutes. Because of the members' psychological impairment, it may not be realistic to hold their attention for a longer period.

### **Length of a Group**

What should be the duration of a group, and is it wise to set a termination date? For most groups a termination date should be announced at the outset, so that members will have a clear idea of

the time limits under which they are working. Groups in educational institutions typically run for about 15 weeks. It is long enough for trust to develop and for work toward behavioural changes to take place, but it is not so long that the group seems to be dragging on interminably. A major value of this type of time-limited group is that members are motivated to realise that they do not have forever to attain their personal goals. At different points in this 15-week group, members are challenged to review their progress, both individually and as a group. If they are dissatisfied with their own participation or with the direction the group is taking, they have the responsibility to do something to change the situation.

Some groups composed of the same members meet for years. Such a time structure allows them to work through issues in some depth and to offer support and challenge in making life changes. These ongoing groups do have the potential for fostering dependency, and thus it is important that both the leader and members evaluate the impact of the group on the clients' daily living.

### **Place for Group Meetings**

Where should the group hold its meetings? Many places will do, but privacy is essential. Members must be assured that they will not be overheard by people in adjoining rooms.

There are some advantages to open groups that incorporate new members as others leave, one of which is an increased opportunity for members to interact with a greater variety of people. A potential disadvantage of open groups is that rapid changing of members can result in a lack of cohesion, particularly if too many clients leave or too many new ones are introduced at once. Therefore, it will be better to bring in new members one at a time as and only when existing members are ready for it.

### **Check Your Progress VI**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

- 1) What are the practical considerations you need to keep in mind when you are planning to start group work?

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## 2.9 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit, we discussed how we are part of groups most of the time in our lives and the benefits offered by groups and its influence on personality development. We looked at various definitions of groups and consolidated them into one definition that captures the essential characteristics of groups.

We discussed the various types of groups such as voluntary and involuntary groups, open and closed groups, vertical and horizontal groups, primary and secondary groups and formed and natural groups. After this, we went on to discuss why people are attracted to groups. This was followed by the significance of groups with regard to the benefits individuals get from groups. At the end we saw how groups contribute to personality development.

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## 2.10 KEY WORDS

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**Group** : A group is two or more individuals in face to face interaction, each aware of positive interdependence as they strive to achieve mutual goals, each aware of his or her membership in the group, and each aware of the others who belong to the group.

**Aggregate** : A collection of individuals with very little interaction among themselves.

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## 2.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

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Corey, Marianne Schneider (2002), *Groups Process and Practice*, Brooks/Cole, USA.

Johnson, D W and Johnson, P F, *Joining Together*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

Shaw, Marvin E. (1977), *Group Dynamics*, Tata McGraw Hill, New Delhi.

Toseland, Ronald W. (2001), *An Introduction to Group Work Practice*, Allyn and Bacon, USA.

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## 2.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress I

- |                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1) i) Aggregate | v) Aggregate   |
| ii) Group       | vi) Group      |
| iii) Aggregate  | vii) Aggregate |
| iv) Aggregate   | vii) Group     |

### Check Your Progress II

- 1) One of the most important factors of group formation is the attraction that a group offers to its members. The attraction may arise due to reasons such as similarity of attitudes, availability of something that fulfils the needs of the members. etc. Another factor in group formation is the goals of the group. If the goals suit the members they join the group. The prestige one attaches to the group also enables the group to form by recruiting more members who join because of the prestige it offers. The need for affiliation among humans is a strong factor for group formation. All human beings want to affiliate themselves with one group or the others as the group satisfies several socio-emotional needs. Another factor is the proximity of the individuals and the interaction among them. These factors enable the formation of groups.

### Check Your Progress III

- 1) The salient features of systems theory are as follows:

- Groups are social systems with several interdependent members attempting to maintain order and a stable equilibrium while they function as a unified whole.
- Groups are constantly facing changing demands in their quest to attain goals and to maintain a stable equilibrium.
- Groups must mobilise their resources and act to meet changing demands if they are to survive.

2) The salient features of psychodynamic theory are as follows:

- Group members act out in the group, unresolved conflicts from early life experiences. In many ways, the group becomes a re-enactment of the family situation.
- Group members identify with the group leader as the 'ego-ideal'. Members form transference reactions to the group leader and to each other on the basis of their early life experiences.
- Insight is the essential ingredient in modifying and changing behaviour patterns inside and outside the group.
- From an analysis of the immediate behaviour patterns in the microcosm of the group, the leader can help members reconstruct unresolved childhood conflicts and have corrective emotional experiences.

#### **Check Your Progress IV**

1) Any five benefits you can get from groups:

- a) Groups provide opportunities for individuals to expose themselves to a variety of situations that shape their attitudes.
- b) Groups change the levels of aspiration of individuals.
- c) Group influence one's mission in life.
- d) Groups help individuals gain a perception of one's self and his role in society.
- e) Groups provide immense psychological support and help individuals express both positively and negatively.

## Check Your Progress V

### 1) Differences between Treatment and Task groups

<b>Treatment groups</b>	<b>Task groups</b>
The purpose is to enable group members change themselves or cope with stressful situations.	The purpose is to achieve specific tasks.
The role of group worker is more.	Group worker has limit role.
The focus is on the problems of individuals and their ability to cope with situations.	The focus is on group work and achievement of the group goal.
The emotional bond among members will be higher.	Emotional bonds will be lower.
Self disclosure is high	Low self-disclosure

## Check Your Progress VI

### 1) Practical considerations required before starting a group:

- The group composition must be homogenous. The background of members must be similar as far as possible.
- The size of the group must be kept small. It is ideal to have not more than 8 members in a group. Task groups can have upto 15 members.
- The duration of one session should not exceed 2 hours. It is ideal to have one session per week.
- The number of sessions will depend on the type of group. 10 to 12 sessions should be enough for most purposes.

- The place for group work must be convenient for members and the seating arrangement must be comfortable. Circular seating arrangements will enable better interaction. It must be ensured that no outsiders are allowed in the place during the group meeting.



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## **UNIT 3      GROUP FORMATION: STAGES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF GROUPS**

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\* Dr. B.V. Jagadish

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- 3.2 Types of Social Work Groups
- 3.3 Stages of Social Work Group Formation
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- 3.10 Role as a Leader
- 3.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.12 Key Words
- 3.13 Suggested Readings
- 3.14 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### **3.0 OBJECTIVES**

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This unit aims to provide an understanding of social work group formation. It discusses the factors of group formation and types of social work groups. It explains the different stages of group formation and the steps involved in each stage, viz., preparations for formation of group, conducting the initial meetings, continuation of group sessions, evaluation of group and termination of the group. It also gives an overview of the role of group worker in the group formation.

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The objectives of this unit are to enable the student to understand:

- Factors for formation of social work groups;
- Various types of social work groups that can be formed;
- The different stages of social work group formation; and
- The role of social group worker in different stages of social work group formation.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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Whenever social work practitioners are unable to solve the problems of client/s by one to one --- client and worker – basis, they try the group approach or social group work -- as an alternative. A number of factors determine the need to help people in distress through a group. Every individual is familiar with group life. The group life starts with the family, and continues throughout life in different social settings such as school, work place, and social clubs. People prefer to be in groups rather than living in isolation. People are shaped by others and in turn shape others. When an individual comes to know that there are others who are also having same or similar problem or need, he/she feels assured that he/she is not alone in fighting his/her social predicament. The understanding about the social situation he/she is in changes as he/she learns how others in the same or similar social situations are coping up, and makes the person too, willing to resolve the problem. A person feels more encouraged to participate in solving the need when others having similar needs are involved to resolve their own need. If the problem is something to do with the behavioural patterns then group provides the social context wherein new behaviour can be tried and encouraged. Certain social situations affect a group of people and people can be helped as a group. Examples include unemployed youth, professional bodies needing social recognition and support, and children in need of recreation. Social work services can cater to more clients through group intervention. Working through group saves a lot of time, energy and resources.

Social work groups are different from other groups. The social group work groups are basically formed groups. The social worker may form a new group or sometimes may work with an already existing group. It involves members in a shared space and collective time. It has the power of changing individuals into members who consciously work for each other's benefit. The

social work group encompass a whole gambit of human behaviour. These nurture democratic attitudes and develop the group as a self-determining unit. The group is formed on the basis of a contract between the social group worker and the individual members.

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### **3.2 TYPES OF SOCIAL WORK GROUPS**

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The social work groups can be classified on the basis of the purpose for which the group is conceptualised. The purposes may be to meet the socio-emotional needs of individual members or to accomplish a specific or a set of tasks of an individual member or group as a whole for its growth and development. Konapka (1983) classified social work groups as development groups and social action groups. Another classification is treatment and task groups as discussed by Toseland and Rivas (1984). They further divided treatment groups as remedial, educational, growth, and socialisation groups; and task groups into committees, teams, delegate councils, treatment conference and social action groups. This classification of groups into different types is not water tight, they tend to overlap. Therefore for our discussion, the various types of groups that can be formed by social group workers are classified as:

- a) Remedial groups
- b) Growth groups
- c) Task groups

Remedial groups are mostly to enable the members to sustain their changed behaviour and to cope up with new situations in life. The focus is more on the socio-emotional needs. This type of group is formed with those people who have undergone some treatment for a pathological condition. For example, a group of people who have been discharged from a drug de-addiction centre have to be helped to continue their changed behaviour and the treatment. Growth groups are to create awareness about the opportunities to grow and develop in their career and other life positions. These groups focus both on the social and emotional needs of the members as well as achievement of a tangible target. Some examples are: a group of youth is brought together to enhance their entrepreneurial abilities so as to improve income generating capacities and make them feel they are worthy members of the society, teaching children to acquire social skills and

social etiquettes, so that they perform their social responsibilities properly and grow as useful adults. Task groups focus on certain work or activity the group is to achieve for its own development. The task could be development oriented, solving a problem or a crisis situation or a social disadvantage. Some examples are: a committee formed by an organisation to deliberate on certain strategies to improve the service delivery, an administrative group of heads of different units of an agency to work out ways and means to improve the performance of the staff and bring about coordination among the different units, group formed to tackle water shortage, poor civic amenities and reservation of jobs for women.

These groups are formed in residential settings, day-care service centres, community settings and even an open or general public platform as well as in formal organisations.

### Check Your Progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Mention at least three factors of social work group formation.

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2) Explain any three types of social work groups with suitable examples.

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### **3.3 STAGES OF SOCIAL WORK GROUP FORMATION**

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There are a number of stages or phases in formation of a social work group. Ken Heap (1985) discussed these as group formation and planning; the first meetings; the working phase; use of activities and action; and the termination of the group. According to Douglas (1979) there are five stages viz., conceptualisation, creation, operation, termination and evaluation. He has discussed these as the functions of leader while Toseland and Rivas (1984) discussed the stages under planning phase, beginning phase, middle phase and ending phase.

For our purpose we can discuss the stages of social group work practice under the following five heads:

- Pre-group (group formation) phase
- Initial (first meetings) phase
- Middle (Active working) phase
- Evaluation of the group
- Terminating/ending the group phase

In the pre-group phase worker identifies the need for organising a group and initiates steps to form the group. In the initial (first meetings) phase the worker and the group members meet at the place specified --- agency or any other place where group is likely to have its sessions --- and initial orientation to the group's purpose and other information is given and shared. In the middle (active working) phase the group continues its deliberations and activities to accomplish its goals and in evaluation phase the performance of the group is examined vis-à-vis the group purpose and members' goals. Finally, in the ending or termination phase the group is made to dissolve and the worker enables the members to part with each other on a goodwill note.

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### **3.4 PHASE I: PLANNING AND FORMATION OF THE GROUP**

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The social group worker representing an agency providing services such as residential care, day-care and community work may come across situations where the services of the agency are effectively utilised by the client system through a group experience. The needs may even be identified by the other staff or client system itself. Once the worker identifies the need for formation of social work group, he/she starts planning for the formation of the group. For this, the worker has to answer some questions with his/her professional background very carefully and systematically. These questions are:

- Why is the group? Here, the worker has to look at the need for forming the group. The purpose and goals it can attain have to be conceptualised and defined.
- For whom the group is being formed? Here, the task is to work out type of members the group addresses to. The eligibility criteria to enroll a member.
- How many? This looks at the number of members the group consists of. Should have large number or small number of members.
- How long? This focus on the life span of the group in terms of time period and the number of sessions/ meetings it shall have. The group exists for days, weeks or months and the frequency of its meetings.
- How to ensure members' involvement in the group? The agreements the members and the worker enter into to ensure the group processes to go on till the attainment of the purpose of the group.

Keeping in mind these questions the broad steps at this stage are:

- Formulating group's purpose
- Composition of the group
- Size of the group
- Enrolling the members
- Contracting

**Formulating Group's Purpose:** Here the worker has to be clear in his mind as to why the group is being conceived and what it is addressing itself to. The purpose has to be expressed in a well-defined statement (s). It shall not be confusing and shall not give any scope for suspecting the genuineness as to the group's broad aim of helping the potential needy members. Therefore, it shall be formulated in simple statements. It shall provide answers to the potential members as to what to expect and to what extent their participation in the group is beneficial. A well-defined statement of the purpose also takes care of unnecessary members from joining the group. It also ensures the agency that the formation of the group is within the confines of the agency's areas of operations and is not against its interests and services. It also enable the sponsors and other resource agencies what to expect from the group.

Let us see some examples of the statements of the purpose:

- Group is to create platform for the parents of the drug addicted college-going youth to share their problems and develop the skills to manage their wards.
- Group is to enable the women in the community to make productive use of their leisure time.
- Group is formed to chalk out tasks to be accomplished by the heads of the departments for the forthcoming financial year.

The purpose of the group may be subject to some modifications to suit the changing demands during the course of the group meetings with the agreement of all the concerned parties to the group.

**Composition of the Group:** Once the group is established then the worker has to look into what shall be the composition of the group. Should it be homogeneous in its composition or heterogeneous? Homogeneity indicates sharing common features among the group members such as age, educational background, social class, and other interests. Homogeneity helps in building the group bond faster which is a decisive force in group process. At the same time, it fails to provide diverse information, experiences, and alternative ways of doing things. Heterogeneity addresses to the need for diversity of certain characteristics of the members such

as the length of time suffering with or coping with the problem, the efforts put in to deal with the problem, and the emotional state besides the other demographic attributes. Diversity ensures sharing of each other's situations, making comparisons, finding alternatives, and stimulates each other. At the same time it poses problems of acceptance and involvement. Therefore, it is an important task for the group worker to decide the composition of the group keeping in mind the broad purpose and the individual member's needs and goals. Another aspect that has to be considered is whether to have an open group or a closed group. In open group there are no restrictions on joining the group from the point of the time. One can be enrolled into the group any time during the life of the group. While the closed group stops enrollment of members after the stipulated time of admission. Opting for open or closed group depends on the purpose, the goals and the time frame set for the group.

**Size of the Group:** How many members shall compose the group? What shall be the ideal size? What are the criteria to determine whether the size of the group is too big or small? All these questions are there in the mind of the worker. There are no hard and fast rules to determine the size of the group. It basically depends on the purpose of the group and manageability from the point of time, space, funds and some form of controls that need to be introduced. Small size is easy to manage, more cohesive, provides higher levels of interaction but may not provide diverse experience, may not mobilise the required resources and the balance of the group is effected in case a member or two drops out. While the large size provides diverse experiences and even if some members drop out it will not adversely affect the group deliberations and achievement of group's purpose, can mobilise more resources, and provides greater scope of leadership. But it limits time, all members may not find enough time to share their views, experiences, and work, it gives scope for formation of subgroups and more conflicts. It is easier for some members to hide and avoid completing the assigned tasks. The professional experience and expertise of the group worker comes handy in determining the size of the group. Ideally a group of eight to fifteen members is a good size.

**Enrolling the Members:** Once it is decided that a group needs to be formed and other modalities of the group, viz., group's purpose, composition and the size of the group have been worked out, then the next step is to enroll the group members. Here, the worker has to make



arrangements to inform the potential members about forming the group. The information may be given directly to the potential members or passed through a notice in the agency's notice boards, a circular to the staff and other agencies concerned and by advertising in the media such as newspapers, radio, television, etc., seeking applications from the interested members.

The prospective members may approach either directly or by sending in their applications. The worker has to examine the applications as to the suitability of the candidates on the basis of eligibility criteria established. The criteria must include extent of need, urgency of intervention, demographic attributes, experience, and other skills. The worker can also arrange interviews with the applicants to ascertain their suitability. By interviewing the applicants the worker can also explain to them about the purpose of the group and dispel some of their doubts about joining the group. Once the worker completes the screening, the suitable applicants are enrolled into the group.

**Contracting:** At the time of enrolling the members, the worker and members have to enter into an agreement to ensure certain conditions that are to be followed during the course of the group process. It consists of a statement of general responsibilities of the members and the worker during the life of the group. Some of these include assurance to attend the group sessions regularly and in time, to complete any task or work assigned, maintain the confidentiality of the discussions of the group, and not to indulge in a behaviour that is detrimental to the well-being of the group. The contract also specifies the fees or charges if any for undertaking certain activities and for procuring any material, as well as the penalties or fines the member will have to pay for any violations of the terms of contract. The contents in the contract are subjected to revisions to accommodate some unforeseen developments as the group process unfolds. The contract may be in written or an oral understanding. The contract binds the worker and the members to planned schedules of the group and facilitates an environment to conduct the group processes effectively.

Finally, the worker has to prepare a stage for beginning the group proceedings. He/she has to procure a conducive place for group sessions either in the agency itself or any other suitable

place, arrange for monetary back up, gather necessary information and material, and make such other preparations for launching of the group.

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### **3.5 PHASE II: INITIAL MEETINGS**

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In this section, we are looking into what are the tasks the worker and members have to undertake to begin the group. In fact, it is the most crucial stage as the success or failure of the group depends on how well the initial meetings are handled by the worker. The members attend the meeting with a lot of expectations. Members attend the meeting with the hope that time has come to get over the problem that has been affecting them over a (long) period of time. How much of it is going to be solved? They are also enthusiastic to meet and interact with others whom they have not met before and who are also having similar needs/ problems. They will look forward to having new social experiences.

While on the other hand members may be entertaining a number of doubts about the competence of the worker and whether participating in this group exercise can really deal with their problems effectively. They are also having a number of fears. They do not know what type of persons are the worker and other members. Are the worker and other members of friendly disposition, understanding and sensitive, and would not misuse the confidential self-disclosures the members are likely to make in the group? Whether they can participate meaningfully in the group deliberations? Will their situation get more worsened? These are some of the fears of the members.

Similarly, the worker too has his /her own thoughts. How much guidance the group expects from the worker to accomplish its purpose and goals? Whether the professional competence and experience is good enough to handle the group? Whether the members will accept him/ her? What type of new challenges and experiences the group brings?

The steps involved in this stage are:

- Self- presentations by the worker and the members
- Orientation about the group
- Goal formation

- Structuring the group session
- Reviewing the contract

**Self-presentations:** As soon as the group is convened for the first time, the worker takes the initiative of making the group members feel comfortable by friendly greetings with each and every member. Once the members are settled comfortably then the worker introduces himself/herself giving personal and professional details. The worker shall give adequate information about himself/herself as possible so that it not only makes members confident about the worker but it also acts as a guide as to the details of information they have to disclose when it is their turn to self -presentation themselves. The members are then asked to introduce themselves. This exercise of introductions shall be planned in such a way that it will help the members to feel at ease, and come out with more details about their situation. The worker should make them understand that the more the details they give the better will be their understanding about each other and will make a way for developing trust which is very important for effective results. There are a number of ways of introductions. The worker can employ any of such introductions keeping in mind the purpose and composition of the group. One way is to sit in a circle and introductions start in either clockwise or anti-clockwise direction. Another way is the members are divided into pairs and each pair is asked to exchange information about each other and then one member of the pair introduces the other and vice versa.

**Orientation about the Group:** After the self-presentations the worker shall orient the members about the broad purpose of the group. Here the worker spells out circumstances that paved the way for forming the group. How there is a scope for overcoming their disadvantage/s through participation in subsequent group processes. Members are explained about the functions and the roles of both the worker and the members. The worker also mentions previous experiences if any, so that the members develop confidence in the worker as well as the strategy of adopting group work as a viable alternative. Members are encouraged to seek clarifications as to the relevance of the group's purpose to their needs or problem situation. The worker also explains the agency's background.

**Goal Formation:** In this step, the goals of the group are framed. Goals are statements of desired levels of change in behaviour or in social situation or in physical conditions to be achieved at some future time. The purpose of the group, agency's purpose, the needs of the individual members, norms of conduct and the modalities of conducting the group, determine the goals. The worker assesses the individual needs of the members and in consultation with them frames the goals. Toseland and Rivas (1984) specified three areas of goal formation. First area covers group - centered goals that revolve around the conduct and maintenance of the group. Second area consists of common group goals that address to all concerned people- worker, members, agency, and sponsor. The third area focuses on specific individual member-centered goals. The goals are again viewed as ultimate goal and a number of intermediary goals (Rose, 1973). The ultimate goal indicates what final change in the status quo is to be attained while the intermediary goals are the ones that facilitate attainment of ultimate goal. These intermediary goals are formulated session-wise and / or stage-wise, that is from the reference of time or progress made. Konapka (1958) emphasises that while framing the goals, care shall be taken to see that these are complementing and supplementing rather than conflicting and contradicting each other.

Some examples of the goals are:

- The parents of mentally retarded children join a group to learn some better ways of coping up with the challenges of upbringing their wards --- the general need of the group members;
- The purpose of the group is to provide a platform for the parents of mentally retarded children to share and exchange their skills in upbringing of the children--- the purpose of the group formation.
- Agency's purpose is to make parents take more responsibility in bringing up their mentally retarded children.
- A parent's specific need is to learn to tackle the aggressive behaviour of his/her child and to make his/her spouse and other family members to accept the child.
- The group-centered goal is that all members will share their problems without any reservations and will not waste the group's time by indulging in irrelevant issues.

All these are complementing and supplementing each other. For example, if the goal of joining the group is to question the policies of the agencies or to demand for more facilities then the goal is not complementary to other goals and create problems in attaining other goals, therefore, should not be included.

**Structuring Group Session:** Structuring the group session involves two aspects. First is structuring the time and the second addresses to the pattern of interactions. The group has to work out how much time has to be allotted to each session, to each activity and to each member. The group has to evolve the modalities of adhering to the time schedules. It also has to work out alternatives in case of failure to adhere to the time schedules. For example, the group has to spend 30 minutes for a video show but because of the electricity failure, the video could not be played. Instead of idling away the time, the group can have a discussion focused on the theme of the videotape.

The interactions among the members and between the members and the worker have to be structured. Structuring the interactions includes how to address each other, how to and when to intervene and interrupt, how to encourage docile and shy members to participate and control the domination of some members. It also includes certain group norms that are to be followed strictly by the members.

**Reviewing the Contract:** At the time of enrolment, the members and the worker entered into an agreement for working together. At that time, the members might not have a good understanding about the whole exercise. After attending to the orientation and having initial interactions with the worker and with each other, members and worker may feel the need to change some conditions of the contract, for example, the frequency of meetings, time and duration of the meetings, the fees, etc. The contract is reviewed and new clauses are introduced or some clauses are deleted from the original contract with mutual consent.

Creating an environment that is conducive for the healthy conduct of the group session is a continuous process. The physical arrangements, financial back up and mobilising resources are the areas the group members and the worker have to work on.

## Check Your Progress II

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the points that need to be explained during the orientation?

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2) What are the different goals formed in social work groups?

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### 3.6 PHASE III: MIDDLE (ACTIVE WORKING) PHASE

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This phase occupies the major part of the working life of the group. Members attend the sessions regularly and actively, working towards accomplishing its purpose and goals ---- general group maintenance goals, common group goals and individual member goals.

The steps involved in this stage are:

- Making arrangements for the conduct of group sessions
- Structuring the time
- Facilitating group meetings
- Assessment of the group's progress

**Making Arrangements for Group Sessions:** The group gears up to attain the various goals it is pursuing. The worker and the members plan and make preparation for the group meetings. The worker has to spend considerable amount of time in developing the activities and procedures for the conduct of the group meetings. A number of decisions have to be taken with regard to the selection of an activity or task, sequencing of the tasks and activities, assigning responsibilities, etc. Materials and equipment to conduct the group activities have to be procured. Resource agencies and persons have to be contacted.

For example, a pre-retirement counselling group may plan for exercises that would give them an idea about the possible changes that would take place in their social status and roles and how best to cope up with the new situation. The possible exercises could be role-plays, screening of a video followed with a discussion, an orientation lecture session by an expert counselor in the field, etc.

**Structuring the Time:** The worker continues the task of setting time limits for group sessions and individual tasks. Though this was already initiated in the previous phase, since the life of the group is for a specified period there has to be a tab on it all through the group process. The members and the worker have to be quite conscious of using time to get maximum benefit out of the group meetings. It is often a tendency to delay the start of the meetings for the sake of latecomers. Delaying the starting time may encourage late coming and cause inconvenience to others who report in time. It also happens that the meetings are either closed early or late. This is also not healthy as it causes inconvenience to members who have other works to attend and discourage them to attend or they may not pay proper attention to the group activity. Further, it is quite possible to get totally engrossed in a particular group task and lose track of the time. This may spill over into the other activity and giving it insufficient time. Consequently, the benefits from the other activity are badly affected. So, it is important that members must carefully structure their time and follow it.

**Facilitating the Group Sessions:** It is not sufficient just to plan and prepare for the group sessions. The very reason for forming the group is to enable the members to come to one

platform to work towards solving their problems, which they could not solve individually. This suggests that the group needs guidance and support to carry out the tasks it has set forth. The worker has to take a lead in this and facilitate the group to perform its tasks successfully.

At this stage of group's life, the members seriously pursue the goals, both individual as well as those of the group. Worker encourages members to actively involve themselves in the group activities, they must share, discuss, and perform task (s). The worker develops some insight into their strengths and weaknesses. It may be noticed that some members are performing well while others do not show progress. Because of this, the group's progress is affected. The worker has to facilitate the non-performing members to perform. Equipped with the sound knowledge base in human behaviour, he/she assists each and every member to be aware of their cognitive processes --- intrapersonal processes --- that are blocking their progress, and enables them to organise their social transactions --- interpersonal interactions --- in the group to establish purposeful relationship.

Intrapersonal limitations revolve around feelings, thoughts, beliefs and behaviour patterns of the member. For example, when a member is asked to give his feeling about the just concluded group session, if he/she expresses that so and so member is rude in interacting, then the member is giving his opinion/judgement but not the feeling which basically is expected to remain confined within 'unhappiness' or 'happiness' with the session. Sometimes the member does not understand the association between these cognitive processes. In the above example, the difference between the opinions and feelings are not established, if the member had developed an association between the thoughts of being dealt rudely by others during the course of the session and his/her being unhappy. In another case, a member may entertain irrational thoughts and beliefs. In the above example, there is a possibility that a member says that he/she feels the behaviour of a particular member is rude towards him/ her because the other member resembles somebody in his/ her past with whom he/she had bad relationship. The worker facilitates the member to perform in desired direction by making them understand these mental states. The worker then make suggestions for reframing and restructuring of the thoughts and expressions, as well as for stopping of the recurrence of unhealthy thoughts to enable the member to deal with these cognitive processes.



The worker facilitates interpersonal interactions whenever he/she finds them deteriorating. Deteriorating interpersonal relations are discerned when members fail to communicate with each other, while participating in the group activities avoids some members, differ and pick up quarrels with each other, and form subgroups and work against each other. The worker helps to improve the interpersonal interactions by introducing a number of ice breaking, role-playing, modelling, and simulation exercises.

At the environmental level worker connects the members with resources, creates congenial physical and social environment.

**Assessment of Group's Performance:** The group processes are assessed with a view to ensure that group attains its goals. It provides proper direction and guidance to the group. It includes the assessment of the levels of participation and involvement of group members in the group activities, the changes that are taking place in the members' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours, acquisition of new skills and strengthening of existing skills that would help members to deal with their problem areas and grow. It points out the areas and type of interventions that have to be planned and implemented by the worker at individual level as well as at the group level. The assessment is being done by the worker, members themselves and others who are associated with the group. The tools that help in the assessment are:

- Structured observations by the worker and other members and self-observations of members themselves. For example, it is decided to assess the communication patterns among the members. The worker and members are informed in advance or later, that is during or after a specific task has been performed, to note their observations on various aspects of communication such as the language, the gestures, modes of communication -- verbal or non-verbal --- the member (s) resorts to.
- Recording of the group meetings --- written reports, audiotapes and videotapes, measurement scales of behaviour, and sociogram, etc. The interaction patterns, behaviour manifestations, group attraction, situations leading to conflicts, subgroup formations, and

leadership styles are some areas that can be assessed by the above mentioned tools. The process and procedures of assessment are carried out with or without prior knowledge of members.

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### **3.7 PHASE IV: EVALUATION**

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Evaluation is an integral component of social group work. The term 'evaluate' simply means to examine the value of. According to Trecker (1955), it attempts to measure the quality of group's experience in relation to the objectives and functions of the agency. Evaluation provides the necessary feedback on the performance of the group. It is carried out after the end of group work activity and before the group is terminated or sometimes after the group is terminated depending upon the purpose of the evaluation. It focuses on the worker's performance, agency support, the group process and growth of the members. The evaluation may be entrusted to the worker or to someone in the agency or to an outside expert.

It points out whether the worker competently dealt with the group work process or not. What shortcomings are constraining the worker to perform better? It enables him/her to gain confidence and make efforts to improve his/her professional knowledge and skills, gives him/her a sense of satisfaction that he/she is contributing for good of the profession and the society.

Evaluation provides information to the agency as to the quality of its service and the additional efforts it has to make to improve its quality of services. This helps the agency to understand whether the support it has extended to the worker and group is at the desired level or not.

It throws light on effectiveness and ineffectiveness of planning and conducting the group sessions. How far they could accomplish the goals for which they were planned? Whether inbuilt monitoring systems are useful and are properly executed or not?

It assesses the progress each and every member has made, the extent to which each member made use of the group experience to effectively handle his/her problem/need, the changes that have come in the member/s are to the desired extent or not, etc.

Finally, it indicates measures to be taken not to repeat the mistakes or overcome the shortcomings for future group formations and processes. Therefore, evaluation is not just a routine administrative job but also a guide for the future.

Evaluation is a form of research process. It involves data collection and analysis of data. The first step in evaluation is to formulate the aims and objectives. This exercise draws boundaries to the area of evaluation. For example, the aim of the evaluation is to find out the competencies and abilities of the worker.

The second step considers what type of data and sources can be used for the data that needs to be collected. Whether it is verbal or non-verbal data? For example, to know the performance of the worker, the views of the members are taken or the movements and gestures of the worker are examined with the help of video tapes. The sources of data could be from the progress reports maintained by the worker, notes and other task files written by the members of the group, other staff of the agency and outside resource agencies/persons.

Third step involves collection of data. The evaluator meets respondents and issues questionnaires, collects them, administer interviews with respondents and studies records and reports--- written, audio and video.

Fourth step is analysis of the data. The data gathered is processed and analysed and conclusions are drawn. For example, if the aim is to find out whether individual member's goals are attained, the conclusions could be 'yes' or 'no'.

Fifth step is to elaborate the implications for the future. Based on the outcome of the evaluation, necessary changes and improvements are made in future group work practice for better results.

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### **3.8 PHASE V: TERMINATION OF THE GROUP**

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All things have to come to an end whether one likes it or not and social work group is no exception. The end could take place on a positive or on a negative note. That is, whether it

happens since the group has accomplished its purpose and goals, or the time has lapsed, or even because of failure to carry on further. Therefore, the termination of the group may be scheduled or unscheduled. The unscheduled termination takes place when the members fail to attend the group sessions continually or drops out prematurely. This happens due to various reasons. It could be due to a faulty enrollment, or failure of the members to develop relationships, or unresolved conflicts among the members and subgroups, or style of functioning of the worker and so on. This form of termination of the group is disturbing and disappointing to the worker as it reflects on his/her professional competence. Nothing much can be done in cases of unscheduled or abrupt endings.

In case of a scheduled termination, the worker has to take into consideration number of measures to ensure smooth closure. The reaction of the members to the termination of the group varies. The worker has to have an idea as to the possible responses and reactions the members express for the ending. The members may welcome or disapprove the ending. Members mind could be wavering between feelings of happiness or unhappiness. Heap (1985) termed these as feelings of ambivalence. One state of mind looks at the ending as a good relief as there exists no need to face a number of pressures of coping with the group norms, need not interact with those they do not get along well, perhaps, even the group worker, they no longer have to share the private and confidential information particularly in groups where the self disclosure is a precondition and emphasised.

While for other state of mind, the thought of disengaging with the group is a shock and unacceptable, feelings of getting once again isolated and alone in dealing with the problem/need generates anxiety and fear, the reality that the nurtured relationships with other members coming to a close leads to worry, the thought of missing the support and guidance of the worker produces feelings of being abandoned and orphaned, how to fill the vacuum created in the personal time that was used for attending and preparing for group meetings is a real challenge to face.

The worker has to be aware of these types of likely reactions and responses of the members to the idea of parting with the group and work towards termination.

The preparations for termination are very much included in the middle phase itself.

It is important to prepare the members to the fact that whatever desirable behaviour patterns the members experience and exhibit have to be carried forward even after the group comes to an end. The worker has to create situations within the group environment and even identify the real life situations where the members can act out the changed behaviours independently. This takes care of many of the members worry about missing the group support once the group ends.

Some follow-up sessions can be promised to reassure the members that they are not totally abandoned. Some support and guidance is still available either from worker or other members. The worker shall arrange activities wherein both worker and other members express their assessment of the progress already made and improvements to be made by each and every one of them. This exercise makes room for the group to deliberate upon what efforts the individual members have to make after the termination. Worker can suggest referral agencies to the members who need guidance and support for other shortcomings in future. Further, the worker gives assurance to the members that whatever self-disclosures are made by them are kept confidential and will never be used against their interests. Members themselves share same type of assurances.

In addition to these, the worker has to do other routine tasks such as preparing a report on the performance of the group, acknowledge the services and support given by resource agencies/persons, and pay the pending dues.

**Check Your Progress III**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Explain the steps in evaluation of a social work group.

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2) What are the steps the worker needs to takes in the termination of the group?  
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### **3.9 ROLE OF GROUP WORKER IN GROUP FORMATION STAGES**

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The group worker is the key player in the formation of the group. The worker plays a number of roles. He/she plays the most widely shared roles of social worker in general, viz., enabler, mediator, advocate, educator, and facilitator. The roles specific to social work group are that of a leader and decision maker.

As enabler, the worker furnishes the necessary information to members so that the member's doubts are clarified and their participation levels improve. She encourages the member/s who takes initiatives in performing the group tasks.

As mediator, the worker resolves the conflicts in the group by liaison. Brings conflicting members onto discussion forum and interprets each member's points of view so that the misunderstandings that caused the conflict are put to an end. The worker also mediates the negotiations between the group and the other staff of the agency and other resource agencies.

As advocate, the worker presents the case of the members to the agency authorities to secure certain additional facilities and concessions. She/he pleads on behalf of the member with family and/or with the community to cooperate with the member by way of accommodating the member's needs. He/she presents the case of the member/s to the referral services.

As educator, the worker clarifies the misconceptions the members have about various aspects such as the problem/need, irrational beliefs, unfounded fears, etc. He passes on information to the members about the developments taking place in the areas concerning their social situations.

As facilitator, the worker creates congenial environment for the group to go ahead with its activities and tasks. He/she procures the required material for the smooth conduct of the group sessions/tasks. The worker helps members who are shy and withdrawn to participate in group activities by helping them to identify their intrapersonal and interpersonal shortcomings and assists them in overcoming these.

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### **3.10 ROLE AS A LEADER**

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The group worker also plays the role of a leader in the group. As a professional with sound knowledge base in human behaviour and social interactions and interpersonal relations, the group worker automatically assumes leadership role. Till the time the group has its leader from among the members the worker discharges the functions of a leader. Douglas discussed four leadership acts the worker performs, viz., preparation, intervention (working), intervention (control) and evaluation.

The worker provides directions to group members in planning the group activities, making preparations for carrying out the planned activities and finally in carrying out those activities.

He exercises control over those members who are either not cooperative or are involved in actions that are detrimental to the group's norms and purposes.

The worker takes initiatives in mobilising the resources both material and human. She connects members to resource agencies and persons, oversees the utilisation of the available resources by the members for the common good of the group as well as for the benefit of individual members.

She reminds member/s about their goals and facilitates them to pursue their goals.

The group worker protects and supports the weak members from those members who are inclined to exploit them.

He also performs the role as a decision maker. Decision making is to choose among the alternatives available. A number of decisions have to be taken in planning and organising group and its activities. The decision-making process starts from the conception of the group and continues till the termination of the group. At every stage decisions have to be made. For example, a decision has to be taken to decide the size and composition of the group in the formation stage. They have to be made independently by the worker or made in active consultation with and involvement of members, agency administrators and other staff and at times even with resource and referral agencies. Even though the worker has conviction in the democratic process, still the worker is compelled to take decision as the group is in a fix or dilemma to take decisions.

Finally, the worker as a leader develops and promotes leadership in the group. The worker identifies the potential leaders from among the members and creates opportunities for them to take up leadership responsibilities.

**Check Your Progress IV**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the generic social work roles the worker plays in social work group formation?

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2) Explain the advocacy role of worker in social work groups.

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### 3.11 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit, we have studied the different factors that necessitate social workers to plan for a social work group and the significant role the group plays in meeting the needs of people. We have learnt that social work groups are different from other groups as they come into existence for a specific purpose of enabling people in need to resolve their needs through group experience under constant guidance from a professional trained social worker. We also have information about the types of social work groups that can be thought of by the worker keeping in mind the needs/problem situation of the members, the interests of the agency, and the availability of resources. We have learnt that the social work group formation has a number of phases and each phase has a number of steps, which the worker and members have to carefully follow. We have also examined the role of social group worker in group formation. We have discussed the generic social work roles as well as the roles specific to social group work, viz., leadership and decision making roles.

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### 3.12 KEY WORDS

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- Ambivalence** : Mutually conflicting thoughts or feelings.
- Assessment** : A process of gathering, organising and making judgement.
- Decision Making** : Choosing among alternatives.
- Evaluation** : A process of examining or ascertaining the worth or value.

<b>Facilitation</b>	:	The act of making easy.
<b>Goal</b>	:	Goals are statements of desired levels of change in behaviour or in social situation or in physical conditions to be achieved at some future time.
<b>Intervention</b>	:	A specific action by professional worker to induce change.
<b>Interaction</b>	:	An action taking place between two or more people.
<b>Intra-personal</b>	:	Within the person.
<b>Interpersonal</b>	:	Between people.
<b>Leader</b>	:	A person who exercises goal oriented influence over others.
<b>Status Quo</b>	:	Existing condition.

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### 3.13 SUGGESTED READINGS

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Toseland, Ronald W. & Rivas, Robert F. (1984), *An Introduction to Group Work*. Prentice McMillan Publishing Co., New York.

Trecker, H.B (1955), *Social Group Work: Principles and Practices*, Association Press, New York.

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### 3.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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#### Check Your Progress I

- 1) A number of factors determine the need for social work group formation. Firstly, since birth a man is familiar with groups of different types, be it family, peers, etc. Hence, humans are more accustomed to be in groups and tend to get influenced as well as influence others in the group. As a result, a worker or any other interest group opts for social group work approach which also saves, time, energy and resources. Secondly, an individual feels encouraged to join and work with others having similar or same problems/needs who are making effort to solve the problem or need, they realize that they are not alone and feel encouraged to work towards resolving their need/problem. Thirdly, certain needs and problems can be worked out only through a group and cannot be dealt using individual approach.
  
- 2) Remedial group are mostly to enable the members to change their behaviour and to cope up with new situations in life. For example, a group of people who have been discharged from a drug de-addiction centre have to be helped to continue their changed behaviour and the treatment. Growth groups are to create awareness about the opportunities to grow and develop in their career and other life situations. For example, a group of youth are brought together to enhance their entrepreneurial abilities. Task groups focus on certain work or activity the group is to achieve for its own development. Examples of task group: a committee formed by an organisation to deliberate on certain strategies to improve the service delivery, administrative group of heads of different units of an agency come

together to work out ways and means to improve the performance of the staff and bring about coordination among the different units, etc.

### **Check Your Progress II**

- 1) The first step in evaluation is to formulate the aims and objective. The second step considers what type of data needs to be collected and the sources of data. The third step involves collection of data mainly through questionnaires, interviews and reports. The fourth step is analysis of the data and finally conclusions are drawn.
- 2) The worker takes the initiative of reminding the members of the time for ending the group. She suggests that desirable behaviour patterns the members experience and exhibit have to be carried forward even after the group comes to an end. Facilities for follow-up and referral services have to be arranged. Assessment of the progress has to be done and areas for improvement are identified.

### **Check Your Progress IV**

- 1) The worker plays the roles as an enabler helping members to attain their goals, as a mediator mediating between the member and others concerned, as an advocate pleads on behalf of the members with others concerned, as an educator passes on the relevant and useful information for members' progress to the members, as a facilitator makes sure the members carry forward with their tasks.
- 2) As an advocate, the worker presents the case of the members to the agency authorities to secure certain additional facilities and concessions. She pleads on behalf the member with family and/or with the community to cooperate with the member by way of accommodating the member's needs. She presents the case of the member/s to the referral services.

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## UNIT 4 LEADERSHIP IN GROUP

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\* Prof. Rose Nembiakkim

### 4.0 Objectives

#### 4.1 Introduction

#### 4.2 Group Leadership

#### 4.3 Leadership styles

#### 4.4 Qualities of a Successful Leader

#### 4.5 Leadership and Decision Making

#### 4.6 Leadership and Power

#### 4.7 Handling Group's Problems

#### 4.8 Let Us Sum Up

#### 4.9 Suggested Readings

#### 4.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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The unit will discuss about leadership in the context of group work. It explains the theories, styles, factors for successful group leadership and the importance of group leadership. After reading this unit, you should be able to:

1. Understand leadership in the context of group.
2. Know the theories of leadership.
3. Debate on the various leadership styles.
4. Understand the factors affecting group leadership.
5. Discuss the qualities of a successful leader.
6. Highlight leadership and decision-making.

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7. Differentiate between leadership and power.
8. Handle group problems.

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## **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Leadership is an important requirement for social development. It refers to the action of leading a group or having the ability to do so. Successful leaders are individuals who can effectively steer the group towards a goal. Good leaders are not easily found, because of the qualities and abilities leadership demands.

One finds individuals with a natural flair for leadership and also individuals who are trained to be leaders. Thus, leadership is an ability that grows out of involvement. While India has had many charismatic leaders, especially in the political arena, in this material we shall be looking at group leaders and their profiles.

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## **4.2 GROUP LEADERSHIP**

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Leadership in group work is the capacity to motivate a group of individuals towards fulfillment of the group's objectives. The capacity to motivate a group comes from both formal and informal power. Hence, a leader can have either an ascribed status or an achieved status and so, it is widely accepted that leadership can transpire from within a group as well as by formal appointment to lead a group. In social group work, one finds and encourages emergence of leaders from within the group. It is also observed that type of leadership has an effect on the functioning of the group. Depending on the objectives, nature, size and composition of the group, leadership needs to evolve.

### **GROUP LEADERSHIP: A SKILL**

A skill is an ability that has to be learnt with training and practice. However, there are many differences between the manual skills required for accomplishing a task. For instance, a hairstylist requires a different set of skills as compared to skills required for leadership. A hairstylist can work on

different hairstyles in a day. But this is unlike acquiring skills towards managing personal and group affairs where the focus is on individual growth and on gaining knowledge. The leader has to consistently introspect his/her skills and abilities and understand the extent to which his/her approach is stipulated by the expectations of those to be influenced, and also by his/her own individuality.

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### **4.3 LEADERSHIP STYLES**

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There is never a one style fits all kind of a leadership in a group. The leadership style in a group would largely depend on the goal of the group, the composition, nature of group members, etc. Following are the different styles of leadership that may be useful during group work:

#### **Directive**

When the task to be accomplished is unclear or difficult to be achieved, the leader ensures its successful accomplishment through clearly defining individual tasks and role expectations of members. His intervention is meaningful in such instances. However, this style may not be suitable where the tasks in question are well defined and easy to attain.

#### **Supportive**

The leader shows high concern towards group members and their needs. This style is suitable for groups working on well defined tasks. Members under the supportive leader are found to be happy and highly satisfied.

#### **Participative**

Here, the leader involves the group members in decision making and in all functions of the group. Discussions, consultations and group consensus are stressed upon. However, this calls for members who are responsible and who understand the importance of their contribution to the group's success.

#### **Transformational**

Transformational leaders motivate and inspire the group through effective communication and by creating an environment of self respect and understanding. Some of the characteristics of a transformational leader are- sincerity; bonding through personalised relationships; collectivisation and teamwork; bringing in changes continuously while maintaining continuity and being innovative among many others.

### **Charismatic**

There is a certain amount of overlap between charismatic and transformational leadership. Both styles rely heavily on the positive charm and personality of the leader in question. Charismatic leadership is usually considered less favorable, largely because the success of group and initiatives is closely linked to the presence of the leader. While transformational leaders build confidence in a team that remains when they move on, the removal of a charismatic leader typically leaves a power vacuum and the group objectives tends to be unfulfilled.

#### **Check your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.  
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What is supportive leadership?

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### **4.4 QUALITIES OF A SUCCESSFUL LEADER**

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Given the fact that there are several qualities that make a good leader it may be impossible to say that 'X' quality is the best. Every leader is born with a unique quality and at the same time has to



develop his/her quality appropriate to the needs of the group, the situation and the group's objectives. A leader works and grows from his/her experiences. Given below are few qualities that define a leader:

### **Good Communicator**

An effective leader has good communication skills. A good verbal and written communication provides a group leader to present the groups' objectives in simple and understandable terms. Effective listening and speaking skills also allow a group leader to accept suggestions or opinions, thus creating a cohesive environment for group work.

### **Organised**

An organised group leader brings about discipline within the group and creates more opportunities for the group member to engage in positive reinforcement.

### **Team worker**

A group leader is a confident person. He/she works with the group members and believes in the potentials and abilities of the other members as well. He/she does not take sole decision but also relies on the opinions and suggestions of the other group members.

### **Recognise the value of group members**

A group leader is respectful of his group members. He/she has a non-judgmental attitude towards his/her group members and believes in the capacity of each and every individual within the group.

### **Delegate responsibilities**

Good leaders know how to share leadership through delegation. Delegating tasks to group members allows the leader to focus on improving the group harmony and realising the group goals.

### **Good Facilitator**

As a facilitator, a group leader helps members to understand their group goals. A good group leader also effectively resolves storming within the group and sets down the group norms with the group members.

### **Humble**

Humility is one of the virtues that good group leaders possess. Good leaders have the ability to admit when they are wrong and take criticism as an opportunity for growth. Such a virtue will also help the worker in maintaining a cordial environment with the other group members.

#### **Check your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) List down any three qualities of a leader.

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### **4.5 LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING**

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A good leader should have the ability and the confidence to take decisions at the right time for the right thing. If a group leader is indecisive and procrastinate on taking decisions it may affect the long term objective of the group goals and also lead to chaos among the members. It is very important for the group to come to a consensus, and decide on its key issues to enable successful accomplishment of its goals. A decision regarding the group could be arrived at through group's brainstorming, discussion and dialogue where every individual participates.

A group leader has to initiate activity and also persuade the group members to actively participate by assigning responsibilities to group members, for the benefit of the whole group and for meeting the group goals. He/she should provide opportunities for the group members to work in a team and take stern decision as and when needed without being biased or having any personal favourites. A leader's task is ensuring completion of assignments that the members had agreed to. The ability to take appropriate decision is an important aspect of problem solving processes which may emerge during the group activity. While working with the group members to arrive at a decision regarding certain tasks, the leader has to exercise proper control without being too autocratic. Here, delegation skills of the leader will be useful.

In order to achieve the group goal/objectives, the group leader should take decision regarding the action plan of the group. The position of the leader may be difficult but he/she takes full responsibilities for the success or failure of the group. This proves to the group members that their leader is confident about the group and is leading by example which would further help the group in achieving their goals. It is usually believed that leadership is as per situation however, it may not always be the case. The behaviour of a leader may be due to the situation within which he/she is functioning but more often than not a leader has to make a logical choice from the available choices depending on the group goals and the character of the group. A strong leader should have the ability to take decision in the best interest of the group.

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#### **4.6 LEADERSHIP AND POWER**

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Power refers to the ability of the leader to change conditions inside and outside the group. Actual power depends on the sources of a leader's influence. The power bases described by French and Raven (1959) are given below:

- Connection power – being able to call on and use influential people or resources.
- Expert power – having the knowledge or skill to facilitate the work of the group.
- Information power – possessing information that is valuable to and needed by others.

- Legitimate power – holding a position of authority and the rights that accrue to that position in the organisation or larger social system.
- Reference power – being liked and admired; the group members want to be identified with the leader.
- Reward power – being able to offer social or tangible rewards.
- Coercive power – being able to sanction, punish, or deny access to resources and privileges.

The role of a leader is finding and maintaining conditions that facilitate optimum contribution of each group member. Leadership, then, is concerned with the discovery and coordination of member resources, on the assumption that individuals are not equal and that their differences are the group's most valuable asset.

Power and leadership are largely interconnected. The effective leader understands that legitimate power and influence are needed to direct the group, especially at the initial stages when the group looks up to the leader for guidance. The leader has to take up a mature use of power rather than being uncomfortable or too much in control. This power should be used to empower the group towards shouldering responsibilities willingly and also in successfully completing them. Groups need leaders to avoid disorganisation and chaos; leadership and power are inseparable (Etzioni, 1961). The leader needs to aid power-sharing with the group by highlighting the importance of member-to-member communication rather than member-to-leader communication.

### Check your Progress III

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer  
 b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

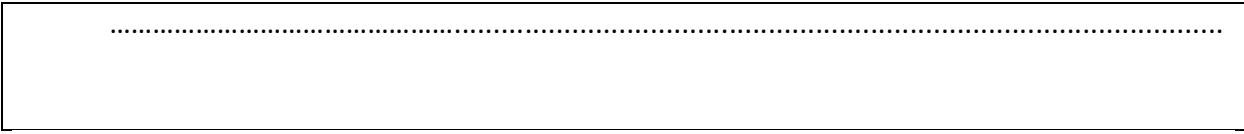
- 1) List any three power bases described by French and Raven.

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#### 4.7 HANDLING GROUP PROBLEMS

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Group leadership is a smooth journey when the group is functioning as per the norms laid down by the group members themselves, but there are many instances when the going gets tough especially during the storming stage of group formation. This is when the group leader has to exercise good leadership skills to maintain the harmony and balance within the group. Conflict within a group may be intra-group conflict, i.e., conflict amongst individual group members or a group of people (sub group) within the same group and inter-group conflict, i.e., conflict between individuals or groups belonging to two different groups. Such types of group conflict are difficult to manage by the group leader and a proper decision has to be taken if group goals are to be met. An efficient group leader involves group members in certain decisions that may affect the outcome of the group goals.

The group and the leader have to understand two facts to move ahead successfully and achieve the group objectives (i) it is normal for problems to occur while working as a group and (ii) almost every group has in some point of time gone through such troubles. According to Trecker (1955), every group goes through storming stage and it is this stage that provides the foundation for establishing group norms to which every group members abide by.

The group leader in the group is a professional with sound knowledge base in human behaviour, social interactions and interpersonal relations. The group leader also takes initiatives in mobilising the resources for the group members towards achieving their group objectives while at the same time is open to the other group member ideas, beliefs and suggestions.

A group leader while resolving conflict requires respect and patience and may earn so by observing the following:

- 1) A good leader has to accept that a conflict situation is existing within the group and he/she should not shy away from accepting this reality. Only when a group accepts that the group has reached the storming stage it is easier to build a bridge for future cohesion.

- 2) Every group member irrespective of the types of group they are in, should cooperate harmoniously to resolve the conflict that is affecting the result of the group objectives. The leader should encourage the group members to work in the spirit of the team and resolve conflict.
- 3) The group leader can affectively handle problem situations by being open to the group views regarding the conflict and not having any bias towards a particular individual or team within the group. A good leader will also make an effort to hear out all the solutions and possible areas for agreement from different individuals in the group to reach to an effective conclusion.

**The points given below are some thumb rules to be observed if conflict arises:**

- Do not ignore that conflict situation has taken place within the group.
- Allow individual group members to express their concerns. Stopping them from doing so will result in more intense conflict.
- A good leader has to be an active listener and never judge the individual who has a problem.
- A good leader should help individual within the group to not allow the conflict get personal. Every problem emerging from a group should be seen as a group issues and not an individual issue.
- A good leader should ask for suggestions and ideas to resolve the conflict and seek support of the group to work together for the group goals/objectives.
- A good leader should recognise the value of each member of the group even during a conflict situation.

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#### **4.8 LET US SUM UP**

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A good leader is not born in a day. Good leaders are hard to find but that does not mean that there are no good leaders. A group which has an efficient leader is more capable to meet its objectives and group goals much faster as compared to the group which has a non-performing leader. Leaders may be of various types, but the best leader is the one who listens to the group members and communicates effectively with everybody. While one to one communication is also important, the leader's capacity to communicate with the group as a whole is most vital. Listening

is an important aspect of communication. A leader should encourage each member to participate and be a part of the larger group. The group leader is a spokesperson for the group – both within and outside the group. They are the group representative and must possess good knowledge of the group – its purpose, composition, size, history, past and current activities. Therefore, the leader should determine what the group is trying to achieve, its progress inclusive of pace and path of progress and the ability to enlighten the group members and the outsiders about the group’s purpose whenever the need arises. Leaders promote safe, welcoming environments that avoid the extremes of aggressive confrontation of members or passive abdication of leadership to members who attempt to dominate groups. In a very real sense, the right to leadership must be earned again and again.

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#### 4.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

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## 4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress-I

- 1) In supportive leadership, the leader shows high concern towards group members and their needs. This style is suitable for groups working on well defined tasks. Members under the supportive leader are found to be happy and highly satisfied.

### Check Your Progress II

- 1) Three qualities of a leader are listed below:
  - a. Good communicator: An effective leader has good communication skill. A good verbal and written communication skill helps in presenting the objectives in simple terms.
  - b. Organised: An organised group leader brings about discipline within the group and creates more opportunities for the group member to engage in positive reinforcement.
  - c. Team worker: A group leader is a confident person. He/she works with the group members and believes in the potentials of the members as well.

### Check Your Progress III

- 1) Three of the power bases described by French and Raven are given below:
  - 1) Connection power: It is the power to call and use influential people or resources.
  - 2) Expert power: This involves having the knowledge or skill to facilitate the work of the group.
  - 3) Information power: It involves possessing information that is valuable to and needed by others.