

## Chapter 4

# Understanding Individual and Group Development

**A REOCCURRING THEME** throughout this book is the impact that an effective adviser can have on the health of an organization and on the development of the student leaders with whom he or she works. The topics found within this chapter illuminate this quite clearly. A discussion about “development” can take many forms, especially in the context of working with college students. During these transformative years, students are developing a sense of self, a set of values and beliefs, independence and interdependence, skills and competencies, and learning how to make meaning of their relationship to the world around them. We believe that advisers need to pay special attention to, and have a responsibility to be engaged in, leadership development and student learning as it relates to individual students within organizations and group dynamics as it relates to the development of the organization.

Throughout this chapter we use the terms “group” and “organization” interchangeably. Although some will take exception to this, it works within the context of this book. The chapter is divided into three sections: leadership development, student learning, and group development. There are a number of thought-provoking examples and case vignettes to provide the opportunity for practice.

### Leadership Development

As Komives (2011b) states, “one cannot taste, touch or see leadership” (354) but experienced advisers know when an organization has effective leadership and when it does not. Ask yourself questions like the following

when you reflect on the leadership of and within the organization you advise:

- How does the executive board demonstrate effective leadership?
- What happens in a meeting when someone disagrees with the president?
- How is a differing opinion shared?
- Is the membership empowered to take responsibility for aspects of the organization?

Organizational development and leadership development have been intertwined throughout history and, therefore, the “perspectives on leadership and views of organizational dynamics interact and have changed over time” (Komives 2011b, 354). Just as the belief that leaders were born and not made has evolved, organizations have evolved to be more about influence and relationships than positional authority.

An example of how leadership is, at its core, predicated on relationships between individuals is demonstrated by the concept of servant leadership. In the 1970s Greenleaf introduced this concept by advocating for a new view of leadership. “The servant-leader *is* servant first . . . it begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader *first* . . . for such it will be a later choice to serve—after leadership is established. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types” (Greenleaf 2002, 27). Servant leadership describes the desire of the positional leader to serve the group and empower individuals to contribute, develop, and lead themselves (Dugan and Komives 2011). From this emerged the thought that leadership can be a shared experience and that anyone engaging in leadership, whether positional or not, is a leader; these ideas became a research interest of scholars. Kouzes and Posner’s research (2008) is a widely used framework which focuses on all people involved in the leadership process (Dugan and Komives 2011). *The Leadership Challenge* (Kouzes and Posner 2012) identifies five exemplary practices of ordinary leaders when they are at peak performance, as follows:

1. *Model the Way* is the ability to establish principles regarding how goals will be attained and how people interact, characterized by role modeling appropriate behavior and aligning actions with shared values.
2. *Inspire a Shared Vision* is the ability to envision, passionately communicate, and enlist support for future possibilities.
3. *Challenge the Process* is a willingness to examine and change the status quo, and to look for innovative ways to improve.

4. *Enable Others to Act* is the capacity to engage others in shared processes, to foster collaboration and develop confidence in others.
5. *Encourage the Heart* is the capacity to recognize and celebrate individual and group accomplishments by creating a spirit of community.

The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), was developed based on research generated through interviews from people's personal best leadership experiences and is described as "a 360-degree instrument assessing how frequently leaders engage in The Five Practices" (Kouzes and Posner 2012, 25). The authors have more recently developed an assessment tool specific to students called the Student Leadership Practices Inventory which was created to "measure their leadership behaviors and take action to improve their effectiveness as a student leaders" (Kouzes and Posner 2012). As Dugan and Komives (2011) state, "this can serve as a powerful personal learning tool regarding one's leadership behaviors and how they are perceived by others" (44). Exhibit 4.1 shows excerpts from the Greek Leadership retreat at the University of Florida. Chapter presidents and council leadership took the LPI during the weekend and retreat sessions were themed after the five exemplary practices. Student leaders were able to experience how to put their leadership competencies to practical use.

## EXHIBIT 4.1

### Greek Leadership Retreat Agenda

#### Friday, January 4, 2013

11:30 A.M.–12:00 P.M.	<i>Greek Speed Dating</i>	Youth Pavilion Gym
	Outcomes: Chapter presidents will learn five things about each other, including chapter, home town, and major.	
1:15 P.M.–2:45 P.M.	<i>The Student Leadership Challenge</i>	Youth Pavilion Gym
	Outcomes: Student leaders will understand Kouzes and Posner's five exemplary leadership practices and what their strengths and weaknesses are as leaders.	
3:00 P.M.–4:30 P.M.	<i>Enabling Others to Act: The Privilege Line</i>	Youth Pavilion Gym
	Outcomes: Student leaders are exposed to the concept of privilege and how they can create an inclusive, supportive environment for all students.	

*(continued)*

### EXHIBIT 4.1 (continued)

4:30 P.M.–6:00 P.M.	<p><i>Leadership Challenge in Action: Team Building</i></p> <p>Outcomes: At the end of the experience students will reflect on the roles they played in challenging and supporting their peers and how this applies to their positions within the Greek community.</p>	Ropes Course
7:00 P.M.–8:00 P.M.	<p><i>Challenging the Process: The Great Greek Debate</i></p> <p>Outcomes: Students will discuss the dichotomy between what they believe are the benefits from being Greek and public perception of the Greek experience. Student leaders will be able to articulate how they contribute to negative stereotypes.</p>	Dining Hall
8:30 P.M.–10:00 P.M.	<p><i>Inspiring a Shared Vision: Council Breakout</i></p> <p>Outcomes: Each council will determine five values that are shared by each chapter within that council that they would want to build upon as a community.</p>	Various Locations

### Saturday, January 5, 2013

9:00 A.M.–10:30 A.M.	<p><i>Modeling the Way: Living Your Ritual</i></p> <p>Outcomes: Chapter presidents will be able to articulate two ways in which the actions of the chapter are not reflecting its values and determine how to correct this.</p>	Youth Pavilion Gym
11:00 A.M.– 1:00 P.M.	<p><i>Modeling the Way/Enabling Others to Act: FL Greek Community</i></p> <p>Outcomes: Student leaders will learn how they are positioned to be positive influencers on campus and how to support each other's initiatives and those of the campus community.</p>	Various Locations
1:00 P.M.–2:00 P.M.	<p><i>Leadership Challenge in Action: Team-builder</i></p> <p>Outcomes: Student leaders will learn about setting an unachievable goal and reflect on what impact that has on their group and how they cope with "failure."</p>	Ropes Course
2:30 P.M.–3:30 P.M.	<p><i>Inspiring a Shared Vision: Goal Setting</i></p> <p>Outcomes: Council leadership will develop, with chapter presidents, measurable goals that all agree to achieve for their term in office.</p>	Various Locations
4:00 P.M.–5:00 P.M.	<p><i>Inspiring a Shared Vision: Goal Setting and Accountability</i></p> <p>Outcomes: Councils share their goals and determine what three goals the Greek community needs to hold them accountable to achieving.</p>	Various Locations

8:00 P.M.–10:00 P.M.	<i>Encourage the Heart: Wrap-Up Session</i>	Campfire
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Outcomes: All chapter presidents will be able to articulate three leadership practices they want to implement within their chapters to have a positive impact on the experience of the membership.

As an adviser, it is important to remember that any comprehensive leadership development program will begin with the institutional mission as it relates to developing leadership among students and that it is imperative to involve students in the process. Use their words to describe what leadership is and what skills they would like to develop. Enable the students to determine what activities and conversations they need to have. And, of the utmost importance, encourage students to reflect on their leadership, during both high-performing and turbulent times, so that they can make meaning of their leadership practices when they are successful and when they are not.

The Social Change Model of Leadership Development (SCM), designed by the Higher Education Research Institute (1996), can be applied to individuals, groups, and communities and is a widely used model in cocurricular programs (Dugan and Komives 2011). It is especially useful with student leaders because there are specific factors found within the college environment that can enhance this type of leadership development. According to Renn and Reason (2013), these factors include opportunities for increasingly complex leadership responsibilities, exposure to diverse others, and effective mentoring.

SCM is based on the approach that leadership is a “purposeful, collaborative, values-based process that results in positive social change” (Komives, Wagner, and Associates 2009, xii, cited in Dugan and Komives 2011). The SCM (Komives et al. 2011) is based on two principles: that leadership is tied to social responsibility and the model is intended to increase an individual’s level of self-knowledge and ability to work with others. There are three dimensions (individual, group, and societal) that have seven critical values. There are three values within the individual domain: consciousness of self (awareness of beliefs, values, attributes, and emotions that motivate one to take action); congruence (acting in ways that are consistent with one’s values and beliefs); and commitment (having significant investment in an idea or person and the energy to serve the group and its goals). Adapted from *The Handbook for Student Leadership Development* (Komives et al. 2011) the values found within the group domain are: collaboration (working with

others in a common effort, sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability); common purpose (having shared aims and values); controversy with civility (recognizing that different viewpoints are inevitable and differences must be aired openly). The value within the societal domain is citizenship (believing that individuals and groups are responsibly connected to the community). These critical values contribute to the eighth, and central value, change (the belief in the importance of making a better world and better society for oneself and others).

What is especially applicable to the work of student organization advisers is that the SCM can be used to diagnose how an organization is functioning and if the individuals within the organization are progressing developmentally. As Dugan and Komives (2011) state, “as students experience group-level values, who they are as individuals may inherently change, causing the need to revisit previously understood values . . .” (47). An excellent example of putting the SCM into practice is the UCLA Bruins Leaders Project (2013). Participants can earn a leadership certificate through participation in seminars and service projects that are all based on the seven values of the SCM.

According to Dugan and Komives (2011) the Social Change Model is an example of a model that addresses how leadership may be practiced. Researchers have also studied how leadership may be learned. The Leadership Identity Development Model explores six developmental stages “that describe the increasingly complex ways in which individuals define leadership and identify themselves as leaders” (Wagner 2011).

Using *The Handbook for Student Leadership Development* (Wagner 2011) as a guide, how students make meaning of leadership in each stage is a result of five components: (1) the broadening view of leadership; (2) a developing self; (3) group influences; (4) a changing view of self with others; and (5) developmental influences. How students make meaning of leadership in each stage uses what they have learned in the previous stages; however, students moving to a new stage have a “new way of conceptualizing leadership that has real implications for interpersonal behavior and interpretation of leadership experiences” (Wagner 2011, 97). The six stages are: (1) awareness; (2) exploration/engagement; (3) leader identified; (4) leadership differentiated; (5) generativity; (6) integration/synthesis. Two of the stages are worth discussing in more detail as many of the students with whom advisers work are developing within these stages. In stage 3, leader identified, the actions and beliefs of students demonstrate a hierarchical structure whereby the positional leader is the only leader and that others are followers (Komives 2011b). Leaders in this stage feel a strong

sense of responsibility to accomplish tasks and attempt to motivate followers to help. The shift to stage 4, leadership differentiated, comes as students recognize the interdependence of group members where students demonstrate shared leadership and practice “a philosophy that he or she can be a leader even if not the leader” (Komives 2011b, 368).

As an adviser, having conversations with student leaders about how they view leadership and the specific role they have as a leader will allow them to reflect on their own development. Because of that interaction, you can identify which stage a student leader may be in and provide the appropriate challenge and support to allow for movement to the next stage. Typically you will find the students in the organization to be in different stages of leadership development. Having reflection activities designed for students will allow them to challenge their current definition of leadership. These activities do not need to be complicated. You could have student leaders reflect individually through a journaling exercise that asks them to respond to questions like the following:

- As a leader, what am I good at?
- As a leader, what do I think the roles and responsibilities of other members are?
- What actions have I taken when there is a conflict within our group?
- What skills do I need to be a more effective leader?
- What can I do to improve the leadership abilities of those around me?

## Student Learning

Historically student learning has been viewed as the responsibility of faculty, but recent research argues that there should be intentional linkages between cognitive and affective learning, that they should be integrated and viewed as parts of one process (King and Baxter Magolda 2011). Student organization advisers have the unique opportunity to tie together curricular and cocurricular learning, answering the call for transformative educational practices. In this section we will discuss, in simple terms, what learning outcomes are, how advisers can help shape the learning experience for students, and some examples of putting learning theory into practice.

### Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are the product of an intervention that an individual experiences. The purpose of higher education is to provide students opportunities for knowledge acquisition and application and to put this

learning to good use. Another expectation of higher education is to demonstrate how experiences, both in and outside the classroom, affect learning. So how do we know that the product of an experience has any impact on learning? We structure interventions intentionally to derive the outcomes we hope students will gain. We use our resources—time, energy, and money—on programs, services, and experiences that are purposely designed to elicit certain outcomes. And we measure those outcomes to demonstrate the learning that occurred and to improve the intervention in the future. There are examples of connecting competencies to learning outcomes and formulas for writing measureable outcomes. *Learning Reconsidered 2: A Practical Guide to Implementing a Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience* (Keeling 2006) is an excellent resource for this.

Being engaged in organizations offer students a wealth of learning opportunities. Student organization advisers have the opportunity to help shape experiences for these students so that the intended outcomes can be achieved. As Love and Maxam (2011) state, “advising is the practice through which a student’s learning and development can be directly encouraged” (413). In addition to the learning to which students in organizations are exposed, organizations are able to have an impact on the learning of others. Advisers are well aware of the vast amount of programming organizations do. Asking student leaders if a particular program has any value can help determine whether it’s an appropriate use of resources. Exhibit 4.2 is a simple worksheet you can have student leaders fill out to help them clarify the point of a specific program.

## EXHIBIT 4.2

### Program Outcomes

What program or service does the organization want to do?

What resources does the organization need to provide for the program/service to be successful?

Who is the intended audience?

What does the organization hope the audience will learn due to participation?

Why is there a need on campus for this particular program/service?

How would the organization measure whether or not the audience learned what was intended?

## Learning Theory

Current learning theory argues that it is the responsibility of higher education to provide students with opportunities to experience the world and make meaning of these experiences in a way that allows students to reframe their perspectives (King and Baxter Magolda 2011). This is called transformative learning and is defined as “the process by which we transform our taken for granted frames of reference . . . to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, so they may generate beliefs or opinions that will prove more true” (Mezirow 2000, as cited in King and Baxter Magolda 2011, 208).

The concept of transformative learning is based in part on experiential learning theory. According to Johnson and Johnson (2013), “experiential learning involves reflecting on one’s experience to generate and continually update an action theory that guides the effectiveness of one’s actions” (46).

The research done by David A. Kolb in the 1970s and 1980s offered a fundamentally different view of the learning process. Prior to this time, theorists argued about how learning occurred. Cognitive theories emphasized knowledge acquisition and memorization, while behavioral theories denied “the role of consciousness and subjective experience in the learning process (Kolb 1984, 20). Kolb was clear that he was not offering a third alternative, but an “integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition and behavior” (Kolb 1984, 21). According to Kolb, effective learners need four different competencies:

- *Concrete Experience* (CE) focuses on being involved in experience; emphasizes feeling as opposed to thinking; takes an intuitive approach as opposed to a scientific approach to problem solving; values relating to people.
- *Reflective Observation* (RO) focuses on understanding the meaning of ideas and situations by observing them; emphasizes understanding as opposed to practical application and reflection instead of action; appreciate different points of view.
- *Abstract Conceptualization* (AC) focuses on using logic and ideas; emphasizes thinking as opposed to feeling; problem solving is from a scientific approach; values systematic planning, precision, and discipline of analyzing ideas.
- *Active Experimentation* (AE) focuses on actively influencing people and changing situations; emphasizes practical applications; pragmatic approach to what works; emphasis on doing as opposed to observing.

Kolb sees learning as a process involving a four-stage cycle where a concrete experience provides an opportunity for a student to reflect on the experience. This reflection allows the student to create his or her own meaning, or theories, which can be applied to other experiences. From these theories a student can determine appropriate actions to test in a new concrete experience (Saunders and Cooper 2001).

Kolb found that people develop some of these competencies better than others which leads them to prefer certain methods of learning (Saunders and Cooper 2001). Therefore, along with his learning style theory, Kolb developed a typology of four distinct learning styles which is applicable to advisers. Stage and Muller (1999) describe Kolb’s learning styles succinctly.

- *Convergers* use abstract conceptualization and active experimentation because they prefer practical application of ideas and dealing with technical tasks rather than social and interpersonal issues.

- *Divergers* are most comfortable with concrete experience and reflective observation as they have a vivid imagination, the ability to offer alternative solutions to problems, and are interested in people.
- *Assimilators* learn through abstract conceptualization and reflective observation. They use inductive reasoning concerned with ideas and can integrate different ideas into logical theoretical models.
- *Accommodators* use concrete experience and active experimentation most naturally. They are doers more so than thinkers, solve problems intuitively, and rely on information from others as opposed to theories.

As Saunders and Cooper (2001) state, “[those] who wish to maximize learning and developmental outcomes need to recognize differential patterns and preferences in student learning” (315). Kolb’s learning styles provide a framework for advisers to think about when developing learning experiences for students in organizations. The important thing to remember is that not all students learn the same way so using different methods to share knowledge or opportunities for students to acquire information will be more effective than if the group only employs lectures as a means to learn new material.

The *Learning Partnerships Model* (LPM) developed by Baxter Magolda is another helpful tool for advisers to use when strategizing ways to help students learn through their experiences in a student organization. The premise behind this model is a concept that Baxter Magolda, using research by Robert Keegan, refers to as “self-authorship.” As a result of her seventeen-year study of young adult learning and development, Baxter Magolda determined that young adults go through stages of learning as they begin to balance their personal needs within the community with the responsibility for contributing to the learning environment (Baxter Magolda and King 2004). Self-authorship is the belief that young adults need to determine their own reality for themselves based on the way they make meaning and the experiences they have as they develop. The LPM demonstrates environments that promote self-authorship and operates on three key assumptions and three key principles (Baxter Magolda and King 2004) that are grounded in the familiar constructs of challenge and support. The three key assumptions used in environments to challenge learners to move towards self-authorship are: knowledge is complex and socially constructed; self is central to knowledge construction; and learners must share authority and expertise (Baxter Magolda and King 2004). Meanwhile, educators support a learner’s ability to develop internal authority by practicing three principles: “validating learners’ capacity

as knowledge constructors, situating learning in learners' experience, and defining learning as mutually constructing meaning" (King and Baxter Magolda 2011, 217). Using the assumptions and principles intentionally allows for the creation of learning partnerships between educators and learners that emphasize the movement of the learner along the meaning making spectrum.

So how does this apply to our work as student organization advisers? In chapter 5 we discuss the roles of advisers in more depth, but for now consider an adviser to be an educator. Advisers have the opportunity to establish environments where the principles of self-authorship can come to life. King and Baxter Magolda (2011) discuss the relationship between educator and learner as one where the learner is in the driver's seat, determining both speed and direction, while the educator is in the back seat providing guidance and support while also appropriately challenging the learner about the decisions he or she makes.

Also, advisers are positioned to know a student's capacity for meaning-making and they can use the appropriate amount of challenge and support to cause dissonance in a way that promotes development without causing a student to shut down. For example, the adviser to the student body president is uniquely positioned to publicly support the decision he or she made in regards to appointments made to university-wide committees, but in private can challenge the president on his or her decision-making process and the ramifications of public perception on political appointees, partisanship, and the assumptions that will be made when it's time for the next decision to be made.

Finally, King and Baxter Magolda (2011) state that the "opportunities through which students learn to construct new frames of reference . . . make for powerful educational experiences" (209). They argue that rich learning environments include introducing students to places and people who are unfamiliar, providing hands-on experiences, and orienting students to the standards within their community. The experiences students have through involvement with student organizations provide the opportunity King and Baxter Magolda are pushing for. Advisers can transform the experience a student has because of involvement with an organization from simply enjoyable to one that triggers developmental change (while being no less enjoyable!). This can be done by having students share their reactions to experiences, reflecting on their interactions with others and applying what they experienced to other situations. Exhibit 4.3 shares an example of reflective questions in the context of a service-learning project, but the questions can be applicable to other settings.

## EXHIBIT 4.3

### How to Make Reflection Meaningful

The president of the student organization you advise asks you to help them reflect on the service-learning project they just participated in. You use the “What? So What? Now What?” framework that is based on Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle (1984).

#### **What? (happened . . . report the facts and events of an experience)**

- What happened?
- What did you observe?
- What issue is being addressed?
- What were the results of the project?
- What events or critical incidents occurred?
- What was of particular notice?

#### **So What? (does it mean to you . . . analyze the experience)**

##### a) The Participant

- Did you learn a new skill?
- Did you hear, feel, or smell anything that surprised you?
- What feelings or thoughts seemed the most strong today?
- How was your experience different than what you expected?
- What do the critical incidents mean to you? How did you respond to them?
- What did you like or dislike about the experience?

##### b) The Recipient

- Did the “service” empower the recipient to become more self-sufficient?
- What did you learn about the people/community we served?
- What might impact the recipient’s views or experiences of the project?

##### c) The Community

- What are some of the pressing needs and issues in this community?
- How does this project address those needs?
- How has the community benefited?
- What is the least impact you can imagine for the project?
- With unlimited resources, what is the most impact on the community you can imagine?

##### d) For Group Projects

- In what ways did the group work well together?
- What does that suggest to you about the group?

*(continued)*

### EXHIBIT 4.3 (continued)

- How might the group have accomplished its task more effectively?
- In what ways did others help you today? How did you help others?
- How were decisions made? Were everybody's ideas heard?

#### **Now What? (are you going to do . . . consider the future impact of the experience on you and the community)**

- What seems to be the root cause(s) of the issue or problem addressed?
- What kinds of activities are currently taking place related to this project?
- What contributes to the success of projects like this? What hinders success?
- What learning occurred for you in this experience? How can you apply this learning?
- What would you like to learn more about, related to this project or issue?
- If you were in charge of the project, what would you do to improve it?

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Adapted in part from the Service-Learning Center at the University of Minnesota <http://www.servicelearning.umn.edu/info/reflection.html#Ideas>.

Based on the University of Florida's Center for Leadership and Service Training Guide for Gator Plunge.

## Group Dynamics

How a group or organization determines its rules and behaviors, the roles members play within the group, and how groups change over time is discussed as “group dynamics.” Group dynamics, as defined by Saunders and Cooper (2001), “is the study of behavior in groups and includes research about the interrelationships between individuals and groups, how groups develop over time, the ways in which groups make decisions and the roles that individuals play within a group context” (318). Group dynamics is a field that includes theory, research, and practice. As an adviser to a student organization, you observe group dynamics and work with organizational leadership to solve problems, alleviate concerns, and remove obstacles to the organization or membership, which are all aspects of how the group functions. As Johnson and Johnson (2013) point out, “some groups are highly effective and achieve amazing goals, while others are highly ineffective and waste everyone’s time. . . . [I]n those very roots of group development . . . lie many of the reasons why one group is productive and one is not” (18). They encourage that attention must be given to “the reasons for the group’s existence, its structure, and its motivation” (Johnson

and Johnson 2013, 18). In addition to this, as an adviser you may work with one function, or subgroup, of a larger organization. Therefore, understanding the dynamics within the larger group may help you be more successful advising the subgroup. For example, if you are the adviser to the Black History Month committee, a suborganization within the Black Student Union (BSU), being aware of the interaction of group dynamics between and within the committee and BSU may help student leaders be more effective and successful with their programming.

In this section we look at a number of theories and concepts of group dynamics, more specifically at group effectiveness, group norms, group development, and roles within a group. In order to provide practical information, we have applied these ideas to the various roles advisers play within student organizations. We have included activities, exercises, and case studies for you to use in determining an organization's or executive board's stage of development, to help you identify whether the organization is effective or ineffective, and to design programs to meet an organization's needs.

### **Group Effectiveness**

Groups can function in either a productive or unproductive manner. Merely calling members together and expecting that the resulting group will be productive is unrealistic. Members must approach their group intentionally with a model of group effectiveness. The three core activities that an effective group performs are to "achieve its goals; maintain good working relationships among members; and adapt to changing conditions in the surrounding organization, society and the world" (Johnson and Johnson 2013, 23). Johnson and Johnson (2013) provide a seven-point model of group effectiveness.

1. Establish clear, operational, and relevant group goals that create positive interdependence and evoke a high level of commitment from every member.
2. Establish effective two-way communication by which group members communicate their ideas and feelings accurately and clearly.
3. Participation and leadership must be distributed among all group members.
4. Ensure that power is distributed among group members and that patterns of influence vary according to the needs of the group.

5. Match decision-making procedures with the needs of the situation.
6. Engage in constructive controversy by disagreeing and challenging one another's conclusions and reasoning.
7. Face your conflicts and resolve them in constructive ways.  
(25–26)

We feel it is valuable to take a quick look at conflict within organizations because, as an adviser, you may spend a significant amount of time as a mediator between individuals or factions within the group. According to Johnson and Johnson (2013), controversies promote high-quality decisions, creative problem solving, involvement in the group's work, and commitment to implementing the group's decisions. Managing conflict can be described as the art of balancing the engagement of students in the process who feel empowered to voice their opinions and concerns with the distraction of conflict and its potential for negative outcomes. Well-managed conflict usually involves ground rules within the organization that would include procedural elements, a culture of inclusivity and civility, and the confidence within the membership that some degree of conflict is inevitable when people are invested.

### **Group Norms**

Group norms are the rules of behavior that have been developed and accepted by the group. "Group norms regulate the performance of the group as an organized unit" (Napier and Gershenfeld 1989, 114). When students join a group they may experience an initial period of anxiety. "The initial anxious feelings and thoughts are supplanted by firm, accepted ideas about personal security, safety, and membership status. Members come to feel comfortable in the group" (Napier and Gershenfeld 1989, 115). Tuckman (1965) has referred to this process of growing comfortable in the group as norming.

Group norms may range from explicit, formal, behavioral expectations of members to implicit feelings and behaviors. Johnson and Johnson (2013) define norms as "prescribed modes of conduct and belief that guide the behavior of group members" (232). Exhibit 4.4 provides an activity for the leadership or members of an organization to use in identifying the organization's norms.

**EXHIBIT 4.4****Organizational Norms**

**Directions:** Have each member of the executive board identify the organization's norms for each of the following categories. When they are finished, allow time for the members to compare and discuss their lists. Discussion questions are provided.

*Process Questions*

1. Are the norms you identified written or implicit?
2. Do the norms you identified apply differently among the executive officers than they do among the members?
3. Do any of the identified norms restrict or enhance members' ability to function?
4. Which of the norms were the clearest to understand?
5. Which of the identified norms are associated with organizational tradition or history?

Meeting structure (who leads, what pattern is followed, who reports, who makes decisions, who moves approval, who decides on seating, and so on):

Position requirements (academic, judicial, experience, length of service, and so on):

Dress (type of dress for occasions, conference travel, meetings, and so on):

(continued)

**EXHIBIT 4.4 (continued)**

Communication (frequency, type, formality, and so on):

Napier and Gershenfeld (1989) have identified three categories of norms that may regulate a group's performance:

- *Written rules.* Written rules may include a published set of standards or guidelines that is included in the organization's constitution. Student organizations may have judicial codes and written guidelines regarding membership, attendance, academic standards, committee involvement, appropriate dress, use of money, and access to offices.
- *Nonexplicit, informal norms.* These norms could be referred to as the silent norms. Blake and Mouton (1985) identify the silent norms as invisible group norms that can stifle the creativity of the organization. These unstated norms in a student organization can include, for example, who is exempt from having to attend meetings, who sits in a particular place during meetings, and who motions for approval of annual budget recommendations.
- *Norms beyond awareness.* Some norms operate without our conscious knowledge. These norms in a student organization might include "automatically raising the hand when one wants to be recognized; saying hello to those members who one is familiar with when entering the meeting; expecting a certain order at a meeting; an opening, the minutes, the treasurer's report, old business, then new business; expecting paid-up members to be notified of meetings" (Napier and Gershenfeld 1989, 127).

Group norms are especially important within student organizations since college-age students are developing their sense of self, finding independence, and determining their value system. Unlike roles, discussed later in this chapter, which differentiate members of a group, norms are what integrates the actions of all group members (Johnson and Johnson 2013). There have been many studies about the norming process and whether the group changes its norms to fit the values and beliefs of its members and leaders, or the members of the group change their values to fit those of the organization. As an adviser, you will see the interplay of norms within the organization regularly.

## Group Development

Groups move through stages of growth over time. “In work groups, social or political groups, sports teams, and classroom groups, a predictable pattern of group evolution emerges in which each stage has certain definite characteristics” (Napier and Gershenfeld 1989, 470). In this section we summarize several theories about how groups are formed and the stages of their development. These theories are applicable to advisers and student organizations regardless of type, size, or tradition.

**Tuckman’s Model of Group Development** Tuckman (1965) reviewed approximately fifty studies on group development that were conducted in a wide range of group settings within different time periods. Following this review he categorized group development into four stages: forming, storming, norming, and performing. Tuckman and Jensen (1977) conducted a later review and added a fifth group developmental stage, adjourning. In the forming stage, members determine their place in the organization, go through a testing or orientation process, and are more independent. The organization in the storming stage has members who react negatively to the demands of whatever tasks need to be accomplished; conflicts arise as members resist influence, and there is a high level of emotion. In the norming stage, in-group feelings and cohesiveness develop, and members accept the rules of behavior and discover new ways to work together. In the performing stage, the group becomes quite functional in dealing with tasks and responsibilities. Members have worked through issues of membership and roles; they focus their efforts and achieve their goals. In the adjourning stage, the group brings finality to the process, tasks are closed, and members anticipate a change in relationships.

You may assist the executive board and members in the involvement, participation, or planning of a number of activities for the organization during each of the five stages. The following lists outline activities for you to use at each stage.

### Forming

- Develop icebreakers to help the members become acquainted.
- Coordinate a retreat or workshop for the executive officers or the organization members.
- Review the organization’s mission and purpose with the membership.
- Identify the expectations of members and executive officers.

- Work with executive officers to share organizational history and tradition.
- Provide information to the executives and members on institutional policies and procedures.
- Have individual meetings with the organization president.
- Discuss effective meeting management, planning programs, and team building with the executive officers.
- Provide support to the executive officers.
- Provide an initial “to do” list for executives to assist them in beginning their duties.

### **Storming**

- Provide mediation resources when conflicts become difficult for the group to manage.
- Teach confrontation and communication skills to the executive officers and members.
- Hold a roundtable discussion on issues with which the organization and membership are involved.
- Review the mission statement, purpose, and expectations in order to redefine the organization’s action plans.
- Conduct a group decision-making activity.
- Discuss and review the executive officer roles.
- Develop a “rebuilding” team activity.
- Remind everyone that the storming stage is a natural part of the formation of a group.

### **Norming**

- Schedule a more in-depth team-building activity that includes greater self-disclosure.
- Have the members design T-shirts, pins, or some other emblem with which to identify themselves and the group.
- Assist the group in starting a new program that will create a tradition.
- Review and possibly establish new goals for the organization.
- Maintain executive board and member relationships so as to avoid reverting back to the storming stage.

**Performing**

- Ensure that the organization and membership have a task.
- Support the members and executive officers by giving feedback about what is going well and what can be improved upon for the next year.
- Step back and allow the organization to perform.
- Provide opportunities for members to reflect on the meaning of their involvement with the organization, the skills they have developed, and how they hope to improve.

**Adjourning**

- Develop a closure activity to help members determine what they learned and benefited from during the year.
- Conduct an assessment or evaluation of the year.
- Develop transition reports for new executives.
- Ensure that a plan of recognition is in place for the close of the year.
- Coordinate a closing banquet with awards and other expressions of appreciation.
- Encourage the executive officers and members to assist the group for next year in training, orientation, or other responsibilities.
- Identify how the organization contributed to the history or tradition of the organization.
- Ensure that the minutes, reports, and correspondence are properly stored and maintained in an archive.
- Record the addresses and phone numbers of graduating and other departing members for future correspondence.
- Give the members gifts of appreciation for their involvement in the organization.

**Napier and Gershenfeld's Stages of Group Development** Napier and Gershenfeld (1989) analyzed more than twenty group development concepts and created a composite model of the stages of group development and the activities, events, and feelings associated with those stages. Napier and Gershenfeld acknowledge that a wide variety of groups exist and that those groups have individual differences; nonetheless, their composite, outlined in the following sections, identifies many of the common themes observed in groups.

*The Beginning.* During this stage, member expectations are established prior to a group meeting. Individuals bring their skills, experiences, and knowledge to the formative stage of group development. It is important for members to accept each other, after which they focus on the development of group goals. Studying the members of a group at this stage, we might observe the following feelings or behavior (Napier and Gershenfeld 1989, 471):

- Keeping feelings to oneself until the situation is known
- Being watchful
- Being pleasant, certainly not hostile
- Being confused as to what is expected of members
- Desiring structure and order to reduce personal pressure to perform
- Finding personal immediate needs to be of primary importance
- Waiting for the leader to establish goals . . . and responsibilities
- Looking more secure in the surroundings than people might feel

The beginning is a time for members to observe, determine their place in the group, and establish goals and parameters. Members may feel uncomfortable until they have found their place; they have little trust but are optimistic about the group's purpose.

*Movement Toward Confrontation.* The second stage begins when the initial discomfort passes and the searching for place is resolved. Leadership and power relationships begin to evolve among members during this stage. Members begin to feel comfortable voicing their opinions, resulting in subgroups taking sides. Arguments ensue as members attempt to test their power and influence. "Group members may feel dissatisfied, angry, frustrated, and sad because they perceive the discrepancy between the initial hopes and expectations and the reality of group life, between the task and the ability to accomplish the task" (Napier and Gershenfeld 1989, 473).

*Compromise and Harmony.* During this stage group members move to resolve differences, and their behaviors are more acceptable. The group is able to informally assess how the members have worked together and how they might enhance further work together; they allow each other time to express opinions, and they are open to those opinions. Group members have been observed to be less efficient during this time of harmony. Decisions are difficult to make because there is an increase in passive resistance.

*Reassessment.* During this stage, the group revisits and possibly revises its goals. Group member roles, “decision-making procedures, and leadership and communication patterns are likely to come under close scrutiny as are the personal behaviors that facilitated or inhibited the group” (Napier and Gershenfeld 1989, 474). Group members realize that efforts to achieve goals must be distributed to all members. With an understanding that all members must participate, communicate, and complete tasks, the group can better focus on determining its direction and on attaining goals. Group member trust and risk taking are increasing during this stage.

*Resolution and Recycling.* The group at this stage is very productive, highly efficient, and very positive. Members still may possess some feelings of conflict and distrust, but the productivity of the group has matured to a point that these are nonissues. A measure of the maturity of the group is not that tensions do not exist but how effectively the group deals with these issues through good lines of communication, openness to feedback, and secure positive relationships.

It is important to remember that not all groups move beyond subgroup influences, destructive communication, or high levels of tension and negative feelings. In many instances, however, the maturity of the group will prevail if the group’s leadership provides direction. Exhibit 4.5 is a case study that an organization’s student leadership can use to practice identifying potential problems and to discuss their observations. The group leaders will be able to draw on this practice and discussion throughout the year as their organization passes through its developmental stages.

## EXHIBIT 4.5

### Group Stage Case Study

**Directions:** You can use the following progressive case study with a student organization’s executive board. Pass out the initial case to the participants and allow them time to answer the three questions. When they have completed the questions, take ten to fifteen minutes to discuss their answers. Following discussion, give the participants the first update and again allow time to complete the questions; continue with the second and third updates in the same way. To finish the activity, allow the participants time to complete the final questions prior to discussion.

(continued)

**EXHIBIT 4.5 (continued)***Initial Case*

You are members of the executive board to the Racquetball Club, a registered student organization. The club has been on campus for the past twenty years. You are all new members of the executive board. The club started meeting six weeks ago, with weekly meetings. Your adviser is a state champion racquetball player and has advised the club for the past ten years. At the last meeting, several new novice-level members of the club spoke up, stating that they feel the club does not have time for them because they are only beginners and the club stresses state and regional tournament play.

1. At what Napier and Gershenfeld stage is your organization, and why?

2. What Tuckman stage is the organization in and why?

3. What action do you take at this point in the situation?

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*Update One*

The president of the executive board responds to the club members that she would like to form a committee to evaluate the club's emphasis on tournament play. The expert members of the club voice their displeasure, stating that the reason they joined the club was to participate in tournaments. They further state that if the emphasis on tournament play is decreased, they will leave the club and start a new club that meets their needs.



**EXHIBIT 4.5 (continued)**

2. What Tuckman stage is the organization now in and why?

3. What action do you take at this point in the situation?

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*Update Three*

The review committee meets over the course of the next two months, providing updates every two to three weeks. There are still a few tournament members who feel that with a new purpose (to include the novice-level members), they will not receive the funding they have enjoyed in the past. The review committee makes its final recommendation; the club votes to accept the new purpose of equally emphasizing novice-level members and tournament members. The vote carries, with three of the thirty members voting against the recommendation.

1. At what Napier and Gershenfeld stage is your organization, and why?

2. What Tuckman stage is the organization in and why?



**EXHIBIT 4.5 (continued)**

4. What can the executive board and adviser do now to alleviate the potential future problems?
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**Intentionally Structured Groups** An Intentionally Structured Group (ISG) is an “intervention designed to promote specific goals; it has a planned structure or framework and a specified duration—usually relatively short” (Winston, Bonney, Miller, and Dagley 1988, 6). Winston and his colleagues have found that as vehicles for enhancing student development, groups have a number of advantages over individuals:

1. Groups are economical.
2. Groups appear less threatening than an individual seeking an outcome.
3. Groups often have a synergic effect—that is, the members of the group gain more from the experience than they would have through individual interventions.
4. Groups often focus attention on developmental areas for which the stimulus for change is too diluted in the overall campus environment.
5. Students generally give positive evaluations of and report enjoying well-designed and implemented group experiences.
6. Groups are versatile; they can focus on a given population of students, an identified problem, or a developmental task.
7. Group settings can provide a “safe” place to try out new roles and to practice different ways of relating to others.
8. Well-designed, well-implemented groups make excellent use of the instructional strategies identified in several student development interventions.

An ISG will typically have five stages: (1) establishment, (2) exploration, (3) transition, (4) working, and (5) termination (Winston et al. 1988).

In the establishment stage, members begin to learn each other's name and background, establish ground rules, and identify group norms; members together form a group identity; and the leader identifies the goals. In the exploration stage, roles are assigned by the group, and a hierarchy is developed based on role assignment by the group; members test the ground rules, begin to develop trust, assess the leader's competence, and recognize the value of participating. In the transition stage, some members may violate group norms to determine consequences, noncommitted members may leave, and members recognize the importance of specific group members' influence, the power of the group, and the leader's limitations. In the working stage, achieving goals is a cooperative effort; members practice new behaviors, give and receive feedback, take more risks, express concern over group progress, and communicate among themselves; the leader acts as a consultant. In the termination stage, members achieve goal-related closure, evaluate the total experience, project into the future, and say goodbye to one another (Winston et al. 1988).

ISGs can be an effective tool for a student organization. You may recognize situations for which an ISG may be the best approach for resolving a problem; ISGs can be used when the organization seeks to identify student concerns, to conduct a needs assessment, to evaluate the organization's effectiveness, to train or orient leaders, to evaluate organizational structures, or to develop community responsibility.

### **Roles and Development of Members within Groups**

Members of organizations are likely to adopt familiar patterns of interacting with others (Saunders and Cooper 2001). This is especially true in a new environment or meeting new people. It is important for the group, and its adviser, to be aware of the roles members can play, which roles are likely to emerge, and which roles have a positive influence on the group or work against the group's effectiveness.

**Lifton's Group Member Roles** Lifton (1967) identified three types of member roles in groups attempting to identify, select, and solve problems. The categories of roles are group task, group growing and vitalizing, and antigroup.

The group task roles for members attempting to identify, select, and solve problems are as follows:

*Initiator contributor.* Offers new ideas or a change of ways.

*Information seeker.* Seeks clarification of suggestions.

*Opinion seeker.* Seeks clarification of group values.

*Information giver.* Offers facts or generalizations.

*Opinion giver.* States beliefs or opinions pertinent to suggestions.

*Elaborator.* Gives examples or develops meanings.

*Coordinator.* Pulls ideas and suggestions together.

*Orienter.* Defines position of the group with respect to goals.

*Evaluator.* May evaluate or question the group's function.

*Energizer.* Prods the group to action or decision.

*Procedural technician.* Performs tasks and manipulates objects.

*Recorder.* Writes everything down and serves as the group memory.

The group growing and vitalizing roles for members are the following:

*Encourager.* Praises, agrees with, and accepts others' ideas.

*Harmonizer.* Mediates intergroup conflicts.

*Compromiser.* Operates from within the group to "come halfway."

*Gatekeeper and expeditor.* Encourages and facilitates participation.

*Standard setter or ego ideal.* Expresses standards for the group.

*Group observer and commentator.* Keeps records of group processes.

*Follower.* Goes along somewhat passively.

The antigroup roles for members are the following:

*Aggressor.* Deflates status of others.

*Blocker.* Negativistic, stubborn, and unreasonably unrealistic.

*Recognition seeker.* Tries to call attention to self.

*Self-confessor.* Uses group to express non-group-oriented feelings.

*Playboy.* Displays lack of involvement in group's work.

*Dominator.* Tries to assert authority to manipulate members.

*Help seeker.* Tries to get a sympathy response from others.

*Special-interest pleader.* Attempts to grow a grassroots effort.

You can work with the organization's leadership to assist the students in identifying the members who might take on antigroup roles and list possible strategies should those roles become evident when the group is attempting to identify, diagnose, or solve problems. Exhibit 4.6 is a progressive case study illustrating several of the member roles described by Lifton (1967).



**EXHIBIT 4.6 (continued)**

1. What are your concerns as an adviser at this point in the situation?

2. What action do you take at this point in the situation?

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*Update Two*

During the next meeting of the committee, all representatives are in character. The dominator is asserting herself, the aggressor is deflating the others' status, and so on. The committee chair, Cindy, is desperately trying to keep the group on track. Following the meeting (you were not in attendance), she calls you and wants to meet with you and the sorority president. During that meeting, she announces that she wants to step down as chair.

1. What are your concerns as an adviser at this point in the situation?

2. What action do you take at this point in the situation?

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*Coordinator.* Points out relationships among ideas and suggestions.

*Energizer.* Prods the group to action or decision.

*Harmonizer.* Attempts to mediate differences between members.

Examples of nonproductive roles include the following:

*Aggressor.* Attempts to deflate the status of other members.

*Resister.* Constantly reacts negatively to most ideas, opposes proposals for no reason.

*Recognition Seeker.* Calls attention to him- or herself by bragging or boasting.

*Comedian.* Attempts to make everything into a joke.

*Dominator.* Tries to assert authority by manipulating members or the entire group.

*Victim.* Attempts to elicit sympathy from others through self-deprecation and insecurity.

*Expert.* Treats members as an audience in order to demonstrate superior knowledge.

It is common for student leaders to catch themselves adopting the same role within the different groups of which they are members. However, depending on a number of factors including leadership position, level of engagement, value placed on the experience, commitment to others in the group, and the group's mission, students can find themselves using different roles. Having students reflect on the roles they adopt, why they adopt those roles, and whether they are healthy to the group can be beneficial to the student and the organization.

**Cartwright's Group Dynamics** Cartwright (1951) developed eight principles of group dynamics that can enhance behavior or change attitudes among group members:

1. If the group is to be used effectively as a medium of change, those people who are to be changed and those who are to exert influence for change must have a strong sense of belonging to the same group.
2. The more attractive the group is to its members, the greater the influence the group can exert on its members.
3. In an attempt to change attitudes, values, or behavior, the more relevant these are to the basis of attraction to the group, the greater will be the influence the group can exert upon them.

4. The greater the prestige of a group member in the eyes of other members, the greater the influence he or she can exert.
5. Efforts to change individuals or subparts of a group will encounter strong resistance if the outcome of those efforts would be the individuals' or subparts' deviating from the norms of the group.
6. Strong pressure for changes in the group may be established by the organization's leadership, creating a shared perception by members of the need for change, thus making the source of pressure for change the organization's membership.
7. For a change to be realized, information relating to the need for changes, the plans for change, and the consequences of change must be shared with all relevant people in the group.
8. Changes in one part of a group produce strain in other parts, which can be reduced only by eliminating the change or by bringing about readjustment in the related parts.

Astin (1993) conducted a number of empirical studies on the influences of the peer group. He concludes: "the student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years" (398). He adds that "student's values, beliefs, and aspirations tend to change in the direction of the dominant values, beliefs, and aspirations of the peer groups" (398). This evidence supports Cartwright's assertions.

The effective student organization leader and adviser will recognize the power of group development, a process in which values, pressures, norms, and issues are at work. You and the leaders of your organization should observe the dynamics within the group early to identify subtle meanings, hints of potential problem areas, how the group exerts pressure on its members and relationships between members that could cause difficulty for the organization.

A final word about individual and group development—we cannot overstate the need for advisers to be as engaged in the process of the organization's development and of an individual's leadership development and learning. It is easy to get distracted with the output of a student organization. They want the biggest, most expensive, most popular programs and events. They want to double the money raised during a philanthropic activity or recruit the largest new member class. Although there is value in setting the bar high, educators know that it is through the process of trying to achieve these outputs that our students learn, grow, develop, and become contributors to the community.

## Case Vignettes

### Appropriate Norming?

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You are the new adviser to a student organization that has been a significant part of the campus as it is responsible for performing all of the campus visits for potential students. You notice that the organization wants to discuss the announcement of the new member class and their annual new member retreat when you are not around. You notice that the organization spends the majority of meetings discussing their social events. You also become aware that recent alums are communicating on a listserv managed by the organization but one to which you do not have access.

- What have you learned about group norms which may help you explain how what the organization seems to value is not in line with performing a campuswide function?
- How could an ISG be used to help this organization?
- How could you apply Kouzes and Posner's five exemplary leadership practices with the new members in their retreat?

### Looking in the Mirror

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The campus programming board has been responsible for planning Homecoming events for the last ten years. Two months before Homecoming Week, the chair of the programming board learns that the Black Student Union and the National Pan-Hellenic Council are partnering to host Black Greek Homecoming the same week. The events for both weeks are in direct conflict with one another. As the adviser to the programming board, the student leadership shares their reactions. John's reaction: They can't do that. If they do we will cut them out of future leadership positions. Misty's reaction: What did we do wrong? How do we fix this? Demetri's reaction: We tried to include them. What gives?

- How can you apply the Social Change Model in discussions with the programming board's leadership?
- How would you describe the three students' stages of leadership development?
- Based on what you know about group dynamics, how can you help the programming board reflect on what may have contributed to this situation and how they may have made BSU and NPHC feel marginalized?

