4.6: Summary

In this chapter, we have introduced task, group building, maintenance, and self-centered group member roles. We have described nine role characteristics, as well as five positive and five negative roles of group members. We have defined group norms and considered how people respond to norms, how norms are enforced, and how they may be challenged and changed. We have defined status; analyzed its origins and meaning within a group; and identified risks associated with it. We have examined the features of trust in groups, including ways to cultivate and reinforce it through such measures as self-disclosure. Finally, we have discussed the nature and implications of social media for groups and their members and made recommendations for actions to be taken by members of digital groups.

Review Questions

1. Interpretive Questions

1. If a group member objects to the group’s norms, what responsibility do you feel the other members bear for responding to the objection? Under what circumstances might the other members be justified in dismissing the objections out of hand?

2. Competing for status in a group is considered by some people to be a healthy process which causes people to work hard and strive to excel. Given your experience in groups, do you endorse competition for status? Why or why not?

3. What changes do you foresee in the technologies that can be used by digital groups? Which of the changes do you feel most comfortable? Least comfortable? Why?

2. Application Questions

1. How do different types of member behaviors affect a group’s behavior according to circumstances? Talk to someone who’s part of a group you know something about. Ask for an example of how a dominator, a recognition seeker, or a self-interest pleader helped the group and have the person explain why this positive outcome took place.

2. What risks are associated with status in groups? Interview at least one individual from three groups that
you’re not a member of yourself. Ask each person to recount a situation in which the status of an individual in the group caused misunderstandings, repressed communication, or brought about other negative outcomes within the group.

3. What are reasonable bounds of self-disclosure in a group? Ask four people to identify a group of which they are members and describe circumstances in which they have found or might find it appropriate to share information within that group about their financial, marital, religious, or political status.