

SOCIAL GROUPS



meaning and definition of social groups

- H.M. Johnson remarked that, “Sociology is the science that deals with social groups”. This shows the importance of social groups in sociology.

meaning

- Human beings never live in isolation. He rarely exists alone. Human life is essentially a group life.
- As a social animal he always lives in group. He begins his life as a participating member of the group i.e. family.
- Individual born, lives, grows and dies in group. He forms group to fulfill his different needs and to attain common goals.
- Groups play an important role in shaping personality, in the development of social organization and socialization.

definition

- 1) According to **Ogburn and Nimkoff**, “Whenever two or more individuals come together and influence one another, they may be said to constitute a social group”.
- 2) According to **Maclver and Page** a social group is “any collection of human beings who are brought into human relationships with one another”.

- (3) According to **E.S. Bogardus**
- “A social group may be thought of as a number of persons two or more, who have some common objects of attention who are stimulating to each other, who have common loyalty and participate in similar activities”.

- A social group is an organised one. Besides having mutual interaction and reciprocity the members of a social group have similar goals.
- The members of a social group interact according to some established patterns.
- Definite relations exist among individuals which constitute a social group.
- In the truest sociological sense a group refers to a collection of individuals who are brought into social relationship with one another and organize themselves for the fulfillment of common aims.

social aggregates, social category, potential group or quasi group.

- it must be distinguished from the terms like social aggregates, social category, potential group or quasi group.
- A social aggregate is a mere collection of individuals who are in a particular place at a particular time but share no definite relations with one another e.g. passengers in a train.
- But a social category refers to a collection of individuals who have some common characteristics e.g. caste, sex, age and occupational groups

- A potential or quasi group consists of a group of individuals having some common characteristics who does not possess any recognizable structure. But a potential or quasi group became a social group when it becomes organized.
- A social group has an organizational aspect i.e. rules, regulations, rivals, structure etc. and a Psychological aspect i.e. awareness or consciousness of the members.
- Members of a social group linked together in a system of social relationships with one another and they interact with each other according to norms of the group. A social group is also dynamic in nature.

Characteristics of Social Group

- **(1) Given number of Individual:**
- Without a number of individuals no social group can be formed. Two or more than that individual are necessary to form a group. This number may vary.
- **2) Reciprocal Relations:**
- There exist reciprocal relations among the members of a social group. These reciprocal relations among the members are the basis or foundation of social group without which social group cannot be formed. The members must interact or inter-related with each other.

characteristics

- **(3) Common Goals:**
- It is another important characteristic of a social group. The aims, objectives and ideals of the members are common. For the fulfillment of these common goals social groups are formed. Here individual interests are sacrificed for group interests.
- **(4) Sense of unity and solidarity:**
- Members of a social group are always tied by a sense of unity and bond of solidarity, common goals and mutual relations strengthens this bond of unity and solidarity. This creates loyalty and sympathy among the members of social group.

characteristics

- **5) A strong sense of awe-feeling:**
- Members of a social group is characterized by a strong sense of awe-feeling. This we- feeling fosters co-operation among members. Because of this we- feeling the members identify themselves with the group and consider others as outsiders.
- **(6) Group Norms:**
- Every social group has its own, regulations and norms which the members are supposed to follow. With the help of these rules and norms the group exercises control over it's members.
- These norms may be written or unwritten. Any violation of group norms is followed by punishment. The group norms maintain unity and integrity in the group.

characteristics

- **(7) Similar Behavior:**
- Members of a social group show similar behavior. As the interests, ideals and values of a group are common hence its members behave in a similar manner. This similar behavior helps in the achievement of common goals.
- **(8) Awareness:**
- Members of a social group are aware about the membership which distinguishes them from others. This is perhaps due to 'the consciousness of kind' as opined by Giddings.

characteristics

- **9) Group Control:**
- Social group exercises some sort of control over its members and over their activities. This control may be direct or indirect. Of course group exercises control only over non-conformists or deviants.
- **(10)** Social groups may be permanent or temporary in nature. There are permanent groups like family and temporary groups like crowd, mob etc.

characteristics

- **(11)** Social groups are dynamic in nature. It is not static. It responds to different changes. The nature of change may be slow or rapid but it is bound to occur.
- **(12)** Social groups have established patterns.

Classification of Groups:

- Dwight Sanderson has classified groups into three types:-
- **Involuntary, voluntary and delegate groups:-**
- An **involuntary group** is that to which man has no choice, which is based on kinship such as the family, tribe or clan.
- A **voluntary group** is one which a man joins of his volition or wishes.
- A **delegate group** is one to which a man joins as a representative of a number of people either elected or nominated by them.
- Parliament or Assembly is a delegate group.

Classification of of groups

- 2. P.A. Sorokin, an American sociologist, has divided groups into two major types –
Vertical and the Horizontal.
- The **vertical group** includes persons of different strata or statuses.
- But **the horizontal group** includes persons of the same status.
- A nation, for instance, is a vertical group, while a class represents horizontal grouping.

Classification of of groups

- 3. F.H. **Giddings** classifies groups into :
- ***Genetic and Congregate.***
- The **genetic group** is the family in which a man is born involuntarily.
- The **congregate group** is the voluntary group to which he joins voluntarily.

Classification of of groups

- George Hasen
- *unsocial, pseudo-social, antisocial and pro-social groups.*
- An **unsocial group** is one which largely lives to itself and for itself and does not participate in the larger society of which it is a part.
- It does not mix-up with other groups and remains aloof from them. But it never goes against the interests of the larger group

Classification of of groups

- A **pseudo-social group** participates in the larger group of which it is a part but mainly for its own gain and not for the greater good.
- An **antisocial group** is one, which acts against the interest of the larger group of which it is a part.
- A **pro-social group** is the reverse of the antisocial group. It works for the larger interest of the society of which it is a part.

Classification of of groups

- 5. **C.H. Cooley** classified groups on the basis of kind of contact into :
 - ***primary and secondary groups***
 - In **primary group**, there is face-to-face, close and intimate relationship among the members such as in the family.
 - But in a **secondary group** the relationship among the members are indirect, impersonal and superficial such a the political party, a city and trade union etc.

Classification of of groups

- 6. **W.G. Sumner** made a division of groups into
- **In-group and out-group.**
- **In-group** :-The groups with which the individual identifies himself are his in-groups such as his family, tribe, college, occupation etc. (**'WE' group**)
- **out-group.**:-All other groups to which he does not belong are his out-groups. (**'THEY' group**)

Classification of groups

- **Besides these above, the groups can be classified further into following categories:**
- (i) Disjunctive and overlapping groups.
- (ii) Territorial and non-territorial groups.
- (iii) Homogenous and Heterogeneous groups.
- (iv) Permanent and Transitory groups.
- (v) Contractual and non-contractual groups.
- (vi) Open groups and closed groups.

In-group and Out-group:

- **William Graham Sumner**, an American Sociologist in his book “Folkways” made distinction between in-group and out-group
- According to Sumner, “The groups with which the individual identifies himself are his in-groups, his family or tribe or sex or college or occupation or religion, by virtue of his awareness of likeness or consciousness of kind”.
- The individual belongs to a number of groups which are his in-groups; all other groups to which he does not belong are his out-groups.

In-group

- In-groupness produces among the members the **sense of belonging together** which is the core of the group life.
- In-group attitudes contain some **element of sympathy and a sense of attachment** to the other members of the group. It embodies the collective pronoun '**we**'.
- The members of the in-group display cooperation, goodwill, mutual help and respect for one another's rights.

ingroup

- They possess a sense of solidarity, a feeling of brotherhood and readiness to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the group.
- W.G. Sumner also said that **ethnocentrism** is a characteristic of the in-group.
- *Ethnocentrism is that view of things in which one's own group is the centre of everything and others are scaled and rated with reference to it.*
- It is an assumption that the values, the ways of life and the attitude of one's own group are superior to those of others.

out-group

- An out-group, on the other hand, is defined by an individual with reference to his in-group.
- He uses the word 'they' or 'other' with reference to his out-group. Toward the members of out-group we feel a sense of indifference, avoidance, disgust, hostility, competition or outright conflict.
- The relationship of an individual to his out-group is marked by a sense of remoteness or detachment and sometimes even of hostility.

out-group

- The individual belongs not to one group but to many groups, the membership of which are overlapping.
- As a member of a family, he is 'we' with the other members of that family, but when he meets in a club to which the other members of the family do not belong, these members become for him 'they' for limited purposes.

Primary Group:

- The concept of primary group was introduced by **Charles Horton Cooley**, in his book “**Social Organisation**” published in 1909.
- the classification of primary and secondary groups is made on the **basis of the nature of social contact, the degree of intimacy, size and the degree of organisation etc.**

Primary group

- In the words of C.H. Cooley “By primary groups I mean those characterized by intimate face to face association and cooperation. They are primary, in several senses, but chiefly in that they are fundamental in framing the social nature and ideal, of the individual”.
- Such groups in Cooley’s phrase are “the nursery of human nature”
- C.H. Cooley regards certain face-to-face associations or groups like the family, tribe, clan, play groups, the gossip groups, kinship groups, the community groups, etc, as primary groups.

Primary group

- The Primary group is the most simple and universal form of association.
- It is nucleus of all social organisation. It. is a small group in which a small number of persons come into direct contact with on another.
- They meet “face to face” for mutual help, companionships and discussion of common questions.
- They live in the presence and thought of one another.
- The primary group is a small group in which the members live together.

Characteristics of a Primary Group:

- **1. Closeness or Physical Proximity:**
- Physical proximity or presence provides an opportunity for the development of intimate and close relations. In order that relations of the people may be close, it is necessary that their contacts also should be close.
- **2. Smallness:**
- Primary groups are smaller in size. The smaller the size of the group, the greater will be the intimacy among its members.

Characteristics of a Primary Group:

- **3. Durability:**
- Primary group is relatively, a permanent group. Intimacy between the members becomes deeper because they meet frequently and are closely associated with one another
- **4. Identity of Ends:**
- Members of a primary group have similar attitudes, desires and objectives. They all work together for the fulfillment of their common end. Every member tries to promote the common welfare of his group.

Characteristics of a Primary Group:

- **5. Relationship is an end in itself:**
- The Primary relationship is regarded not as a means to an end but rather as an end itself.
- **6. Relationship is Personal:**
- The primary relationship is a matter of persons
- It should be noted that this relationship comes to an end as soon as one of the partners disappears from the primary group.
- The personal relationship is non transferable and irreplaceable.

Characteristics of a Primary Group:

- **(vii) Relationship is Inclusive:**
- In the primary group, we face our fellows as total human beings. A person comes to know his fellow in all the details of his life, as a whole being.

Importance of Primacy Group:

- The primary group plays a commanding role in the **development of human personality**. It is fundamental in forming the social nature and ideal of the individual.
- It is regarded as a **nursery of human nature**. The development of “self” – the core of personality depends on close, intimate and personal contacts.
- Primary group acts as an **agency of social control**. It not only provides security to the members but also control their behaviour and regulate their relations.

Importance of Primacy Group

- The primary groups, such as the family or the play group, are preeminently the **agencies of socialization**. They **transmit culture** and in this respect they are irreplaceable. They help the individuals to acquire basic attitudes towards people, social institutions and the world around him.
- The **attitude of kindness, sympathy, love, tolerance, mutual help and sacrifice** which provide the cementing force to social structure are developed in the primary groups. From such experiences and attitudes spring the desire for democracy and freedom.

Secondary Group:

- Secondary groups may be defined as those associations which are characterized by impersonal or secondary relations and specialization of functions.
- Ogburn and Nimkoff say, “The groups which provide experience lacking in intimacy are called secondary groups”.
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Secondary Group:

- The Secondary groups are of special significance in modern industrial society. They have become almost inevitable today. Their appearance is mainly due to the growing cultural complexity

Secondary Group:

- They are also called “special interest groups” or “self-interest groups”.
- The examples of secondary groups include a city, a nation, a political party, corporation, labour union, an army, a large crowd etc.
- These groups have no direct bearing on the members. Here members are too many and too scattered. Here human contacts are superficial, undefined and mechanical.

characteristics of secondary group

- **1. Large in size:**
- **2. Formality:**
- The relations of members in a secondary group are of a formal type. They are controlled by formal rules and regulations.
- Formal social controls such as law, legislation, police, court etc. are very much important for the members.
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characteristics of secondary group

- **3. Impersonality:-**
- Secondary relations are impersonal in nature.
- Here contacts are chiefly indirect. The two persons may never see each other.
- Relations among them are impersonal, because members are not very much interested in other members as 'persons'.
- They are more concerned with their self-centered goals than with other persons.
- There is no sentiment attaching to the contacts. It is not required that the parties know each other

characteristics of secondary group

- **4. Indirect Cooperation:**
- All contribute to the same result, but not in the same process. They do unlike things together.
- In the large scale organisation where division of labour is complex, the members have not only different functions but different powers, different degrees of participation, different rights and obligations.

characteristics of secondary group

- **5. Voluntary Membership:**
- The membership of most of the secondary groups is not compulsory but voluntary. Individuals are at liberty to join or to go away from the groups.
- **6. Status depends upon Role:**
- The determination of his status is not influenced by ascription or by his birth or personal qualities but by the achievement or the role he plays.

Importance of Secondary Group:

- The secondary groups occupy a dominant place in modern civilised and industrial societies.
- But as the society expands demanding more and more division of labour and specialization of functions, the large-scale secondary groups become necessary.
- The small communities have now given way to large communities.

Difference between Primary Group and Secondary Group:

- **1. Size:**
- A primary group is small in size as well as area. The membership is limited to a small area.
- At the other end in a secondary group the membership is widespread. It may contain thousands of members scattered in different parts of the world

Difference between Primary Group and Secondary Group:

- **2. Physical Proximity:**
- Primary groups are based on close contacts. People in these groups do not merely know one another and interact frequently. But they know one another well and have strong emotional ties.
- Secondary groups do not give its members feeling of close proximity that primary groups give.

Difference between Primary Group and Secondary Group:

- **3. Duration:**
- Primary groups exist for a longer period. Relationships in primary group are permanent in nature.
- Secondary groups, on the other hand are based on temporary relationship.
- **4. Kinds of Cooperation:**
- In a secondary group, the cooperation with the fellow members is direct. The members cooperate only to achieve the objective of the group.
- In a primary group, on the other hand, the members directly cooperate with each other participating in the same process. They sit together, discuss together play together.

Difference between Primary Group and Secondary Group:

- **5. Types of Structures:**
- Every secondary group is regulated by a set of formal rules. A formal authority is set up with designated powers and a clear cut division of labour in which the function of each is specified in relation to the function of all the rest fellows.
- The primary group is based on a informal structure. The members participate in the same process. The spontaneous adjustment in the working of the group. No formal and detail rules are drafted. The structure is simple.

Difference between Primary Group and Secondary Group:

- **6. End in itself versus Means to an End:**
- Primary groups are an end in themselves. Individuals enter into primary relations because such relations contribute to personal development, security and well-being.
- Secondary group on the other hand is goal oriented.

Difference between Primary Group and Secondary Group:

- **7. Position:**
- In primary groups, the position or status of a person is fixed according to his birth, age and sex.
- But in secondary groups, the position of a person is determined by his roles.
- **8. Difference in Development of Personality:**
- Primary group is concerned with the total aspects personality of a person and it develops his whole personality.
- Secondary group, on the other hand, is concerned with a particular aspect of personality and it develops only that aspect.

Difference between Primary Group and Secondary Group:

- **9. Relationship:**
- The relationship of members with each other in primary group is direct, intimate and personal. They meet face to face and develop direct contacts.
- A secondary group is based on impersonal relationships. It does not exercise a primary influence over its members because they do not live in presence and thought of one another.

Difference between Primary Group and Secondary Group:

- **10. Social Control:**
- Primary group uses informal ways of social control
- Secondary group on the other hand, uses formal means of checking deviation of violation of norms.

Reference Group:

- The term 'reference group' was coined by Herbert Hyman (1942) to apply to the group against which an individual evaluates his or own situation or conduct.
- He distinguished between membership group to which people actually belong and a reference group which is used as a basis for comparison.

Reference Group

- A reference group may or may not be a membership group. The term reference was introduced into the literature on small group by Muzaffar Sheriff in his book “An Outline of Social Psychology”.
- The concept was subsequently elaborated by R.K. Merton and Turner.

Reference Group

- Strictly speaking, a reference group is one to which we do not actually belong but with which we identify ourselves or to which we would like to belong.
- We may actually belong to a group, yet we accept the norms of another group to which we refer but to which we do not actually belong.
- L Merton writes, individual in the society choose not only reference group but also reference individual.
- Reference individual has often been described as “role model”.

Reference Group

- Horton and Hunt have pointed out, “A reference group is any group to which we refer when making judgements – any group whose value-judgements become our value-judgements”.
- According to Sherif, “A reference group is one to which the individual refers and with which he identifies himself, either consciously or subconsciously. The central aspect of the reference group is psychological identification.”

Reference Group

- Ogburn and Nimkoff say, “Groups which serve as points of comparison are known as reference groups”