

**Basic Concepts: Social Groups:
Meaning, Characteristics,
Classification**

SOCIAL GROUP

1. **Social Group is any collection of persons who share common interest and reason for being together. Some groups are formed naturally; others are organised for a particular purpose.**
2. **A true group exhibits some degree of social cohesion and is more than a simple collection of individuals, such as people waiting at a bus stop, or people waiting in a line. Characteristics shared by members of a group may include interests, values, representations, ethnic or social background or kinship ties**



DEFINITIONS

“A group is any collection of human beings who are brought into social relationships with one another .”

Maclver and Page

“Whenever two or more individuals come together and influences one another they may be said to constitute Social Group”

Ogburn and Nimkoff

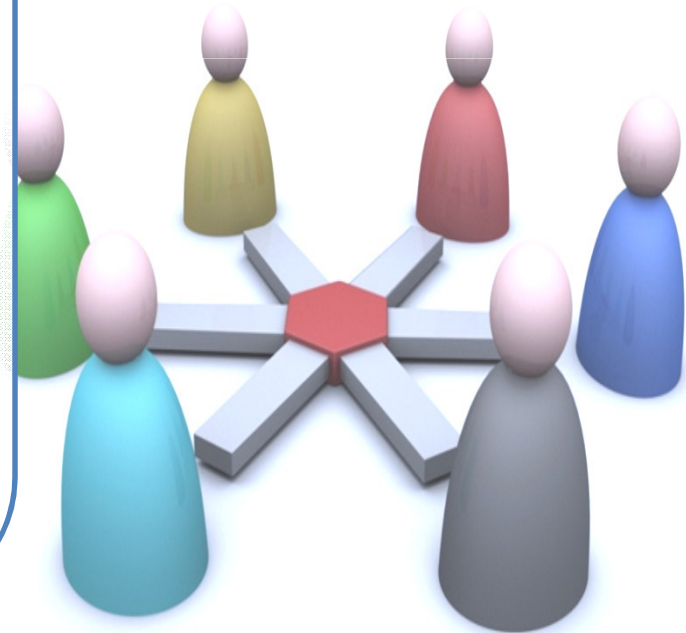
“A social group is a number of people who define themselves as members of a group; who expect certain behaviour from members that they do not expect from outsiders and whom others define as belonging to a group”

Robert K. Merton



CHARACTERISTICS

- **Collectivity**
- **Interaction**
- **Mutual Awareness**
- **Reciprocity**
- **We Feeling**



Collectivity

1. The basic pre – requisite of a group is the existence of more than one individual . Groups vary in size from two members to several hundred million.
2. These members are aware of the fact that they belong to the same group.



Interaction

1. The most important characteristics of a group is the distinctive interaction that occurs among its members.
2. When the patterns of interaction become more involving , we can think of a group.
3. For e.g. in a class –room, students exchange greetings and share information with each other and they are treated as a group by teachers.



Mutual Awareness

1. There is physical and symbolic interaction among the members of a group. They are aware of the existence of other members.
2. Mutual awareness makes them respond and behave in a particular ways and thus, influence one another.
3. Each member recognizes that he is a part of the group. Greater importance is given to the group life in comparison with individual life.
4. It indicates that members derive their meaning and significance only in relation to one another.



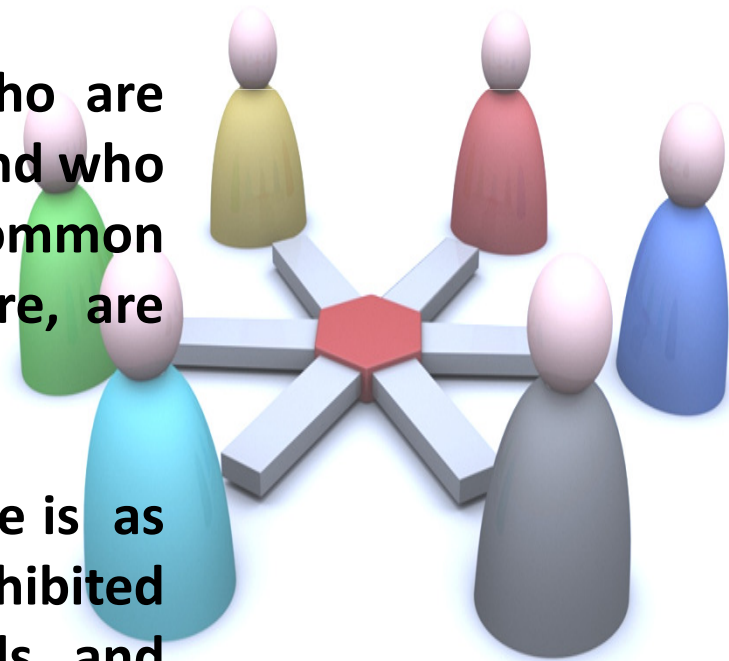
Reciprocity

1. Members are not only aware of one another, but also respond or behave in particular ways.
2. Their relations are reciprocal.
3. They are in a position to stimulate each other meaningfully and are in a position to respond meaningfully to any common stimulus.
4. Members are aware of the roles, duties and obligations, as well as the privileges resulting from group membership.



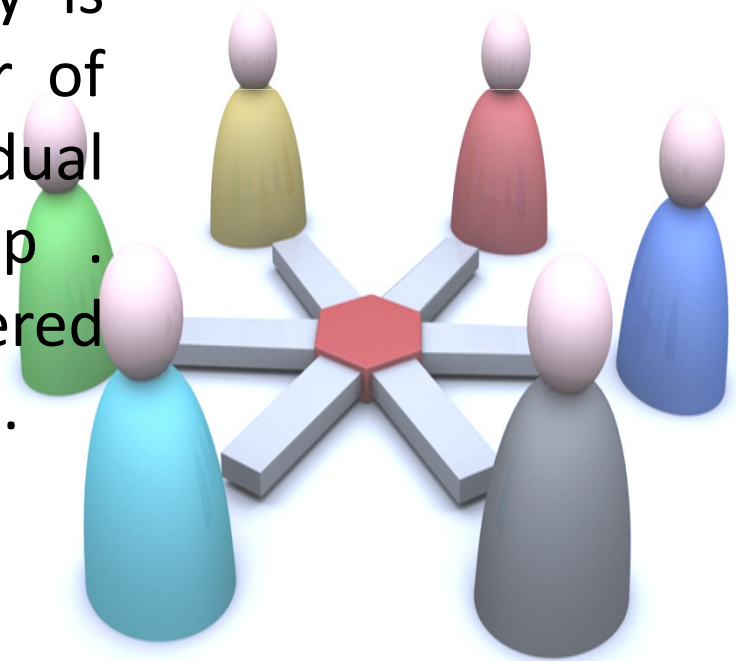
We - Feeling

1. **We –feeling means that group members have common loyalties. They share some similar values and see as well as set themselves apart from the rest of the world because of their membership in one particular group.**
2. **In this sense, citizens of a nation, who are united by common political processes and who share a number of similar loyalties, a common history and a sense of common future, are considered a group.**
3. **Among the members of the group, there is as sense of belongingness which is exhibited through common ideas, values, goals and activities.**



Classification of Groups

There is an extraordinarily large number of groups and there is a great diversity among them. Groups vary in size. The number of groups in every society is countless; It surpasses the number of individuals because each individual belongs to more than one group. Various sociologists have considered different bases for classifying groups.



Classification by Maclver and Page

According to Maclver and Page, Groups are classified on the basis of:

1. Size
2. Quality of Social Interaction
3. Degree of intimacy
4. Range of group interests
5. Duration of Interests
6. Degree of Organization

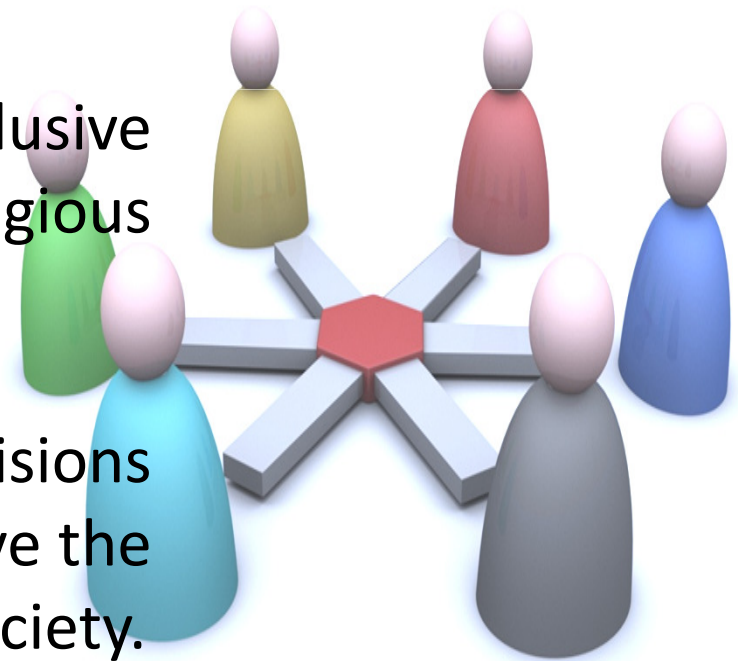


Classification by Sorokin

According to Sorokin, social groups are divided into two major types:

Vertical and Horizontal

1. Vertical groups are large inclusive groups, such as Nations, Religious Organisations, Political Parties etc.
2. Horizontal groups are smaller divisions such as economic classes which give the individual the status and rank in society.

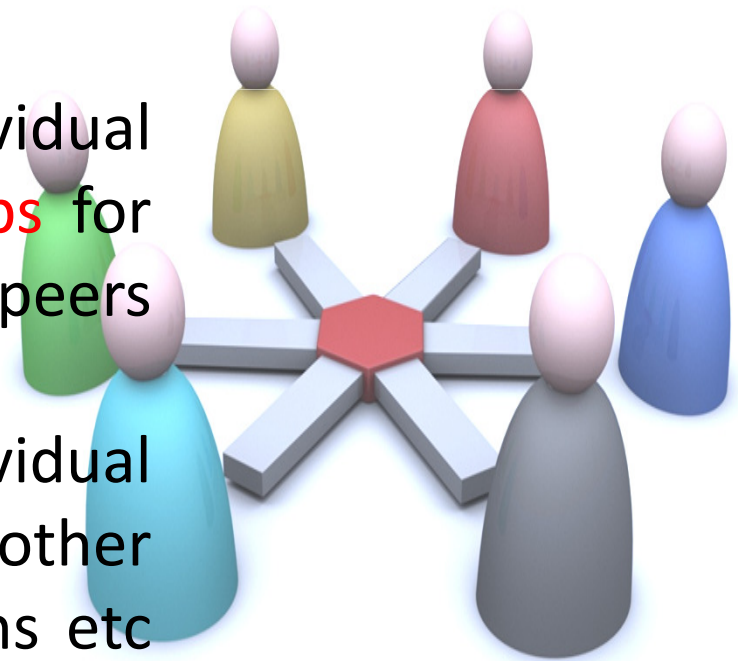


Classification by Sumner

According to Sumner, social groups are divided into two major types:

In Group and Out Group

1. The groups with which the individual identifies himself are his **in groups** for instance, his family, friends and peers etc.
2. The groups to which the individual does not belong. For instance, other sex, others' families, other Nations etc are **Secondary Groups**.



Reference Group

Reference group is the group to which the individual refers in the sense that he identifies himself either consciously or unconsciously with it.

Herbert Hayman

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.

Sherif

A Reference group that group whose outlook is used by the actor as the frame of reference in the organization of his perceptual field.

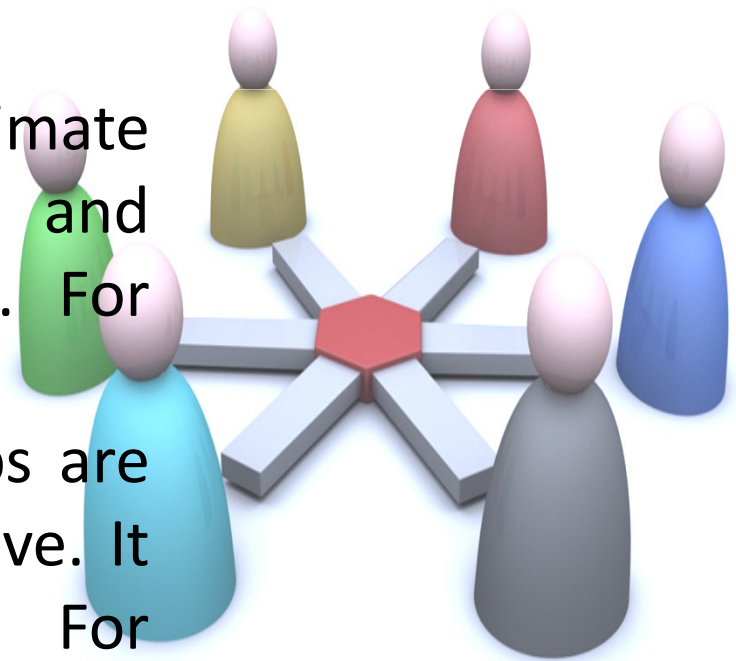
Shibutani

Classification by C.H. Cooley

According to Sumner, social groups are divided into two major types:

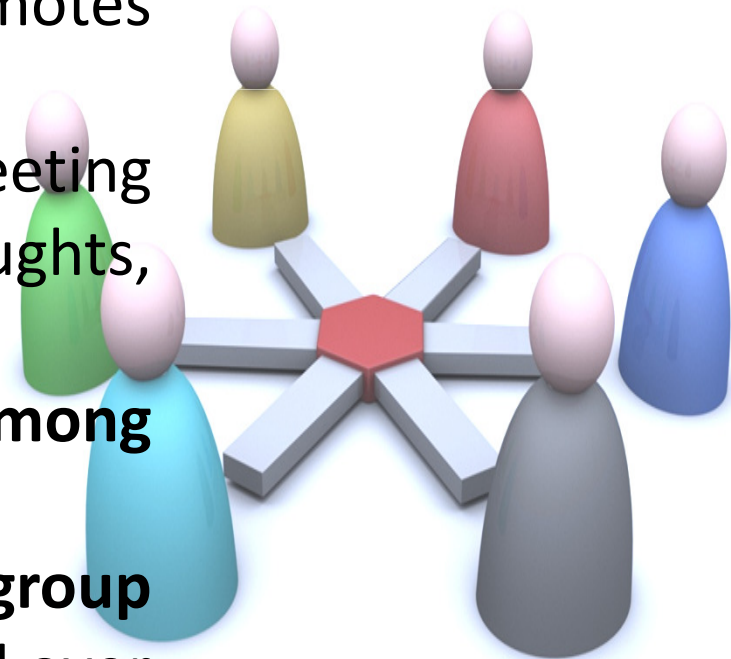
Primary and Secondary Groups

1. The groups characterized by intimate face – to-face association and cooperation are primary groups. For instance, family, friends etc.
2. On the contrary, secondary groups are less intimate, personal and inclusive. It involves indirect interaction. For instance, one's work place



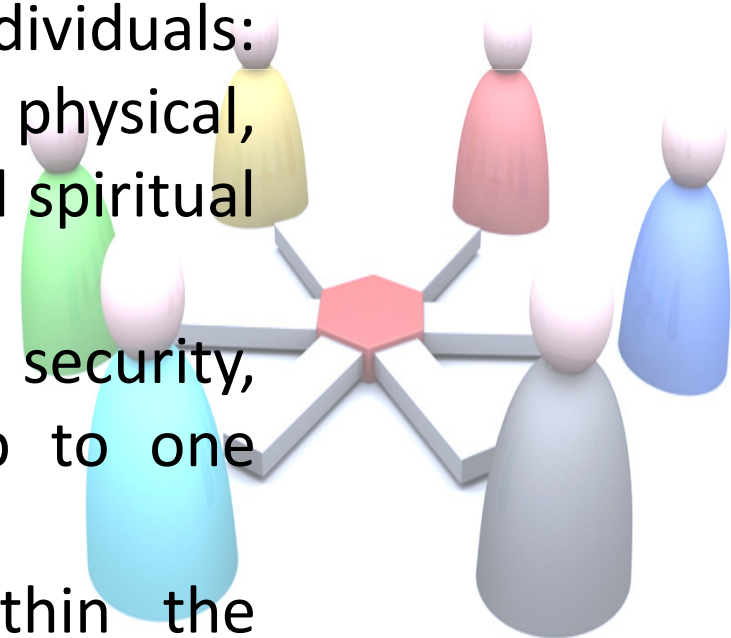
Characteristics of Primary Group

1. **Physical Proximity:** The members of a group share close relationship and they have intimate contact with each other.
2. **Small in size**
3. **Stability in nature:** Stability promotes closeness.
4. **Continuity in relationship:** By meeting frequently and by exchanging thoughts, intimacy increases.
5. **Common commitments among members**
6. **Maximum control over group members:** Family members control over family affairs.



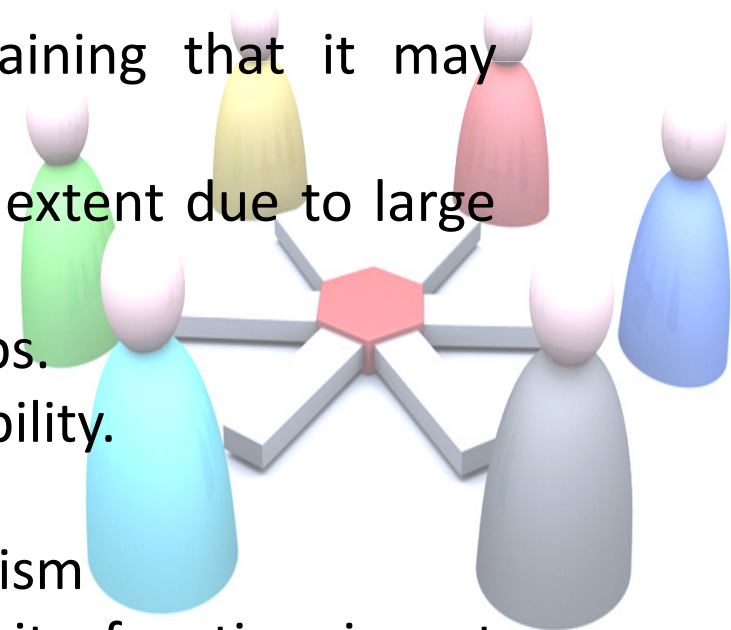
Importance of Primary Group

1. To develop the personality
2. The efficiency of members increases and persons of the group get help, inspiration and cooperation from one another.
3. Satisfaction of total needs of the individuals: Primary groups help fulfilling physical, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual of the individual.
4. Group members provide love, security, belongingness and companionship to one another.
5. Socialization process initiates within the primary group.



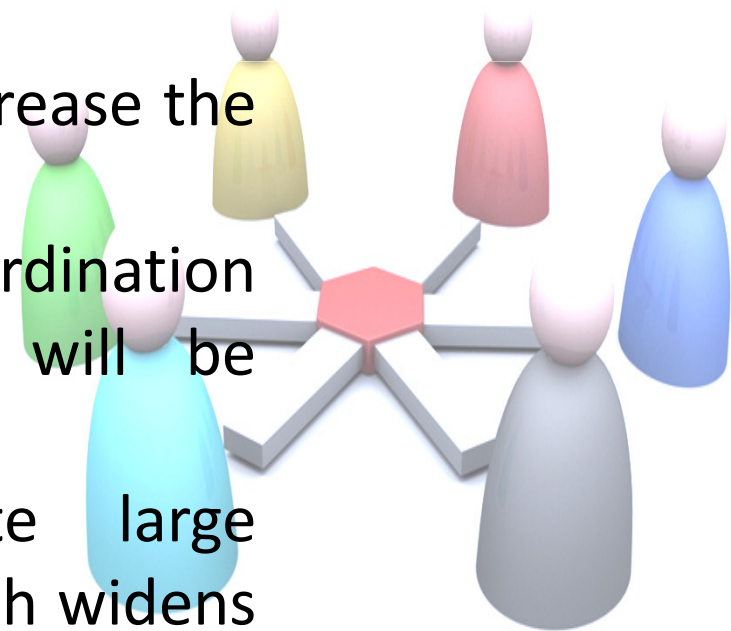
Characteristics of Secondary Group

1. Position of a member depends upon their role and status.
2. Individuality develops in the persons because their relations are based on self-interest.
3. Self-dependence among members.
4. It is large in size.
5. No physical closeness.
6. Formed for some purpose after attaining that it may dismantle.
7. Group cannot exercise control to that extent due to large size.
8. Lacks stability and personal relationships.
9. Has limited acquaintance and responsibility.
10. Members play active and passive roles
11. Possibility of development in individualism
12. It is formed with definite objective, its function is not spontaneous



Importance of Secondary Groups

1. The needs are satisfied in the group with the advance of technology and associated with social change.
2. This group satisfies the changing needs of society and individual.
3. Rules formed by the group, will increase the efficiency of the work.
4. Delegation of the authority, coordination and planning of the activities will be implemented.
5. Secondary groups accommodate large number of members/localities which widens the outlook of groups.



Conclusion

Therefore we can say that a social group is any number of people who share common goals and/or beliefs. A true group exhibits some degree of social cohesion and is more than a simple collection or aggregate of individuals, such as people waiting at a bus stop, or people waiting in a line. Characteristics shared by members of a group may include interests, values, representations, ethnic or social background.

