

Amit kumar Gupta
 Programme- Master in social work
 PG Department of Sociology
 Patna University , Patna

UNIT 1

Classification of Groups: Cooley, Sumner, Maciver and Page

Core course-CC7-Social Work with Groups
Introduction
Classification Of Groups

Introduction

Human being is a social animal. It is rare to know an individual living isolated. Individual's life is made up largely by participating in groups. An individual goes outside her/his home during the day and works amongst the group members and returns in the evening for a common meal where members of the family relate their experiences. All human beings normally enter their first group - the family, at the moment of birth and in the course of life times. By and large one joins a profession and becomes a member of the group, like you are a member of nursing group.

Classification of group

The groups can be classified into a number of ways and each individual may belong to many groups. The individual may be a member of a family, club, work group, world, state, country, community, village, political party, ethnic group or international organization.

Cooley has classified group into two:

Primary and Secondary Group

Primary Groups Cooley described *primary* groups as collectivities of individuals – as in the case of play groups, neighbourhood or village – “characterized by intimate, sympathetic face-to-face association and cooperation.” A *primary* group is a group in which members develop close, personal, intimate and enduring relationships; e.g. family, neighbours, work associates, etc. Here, the members know each other very well, are greatly influenced by one another and feel closely related.

Importance of a Primary Group At the level of individual, a primary group

1. Helps in development of personality
2. Increases the efficiency of an individual
3. Fulfills the psychological needs.

At the level of society, a primary group

1. Transfers the culture from one generation to another
2. Carries cultural norms of the society within the society
3. Provides means of social control and helps maintaining the social order
4. Ensures the performance of social roles in accordance with society norms.

Secondary Groups are those in which the individuals are not in direct contact. The members of secondary groups influence each other in an indirect manner and through the various agencies. *Secondary groups* are characterized by contractual relationships and communication on indirect media' (Faris, 1937). These are 'relatively larger, relatively temporary, anonymous'; they are also 'formal, impersonal groups, in which there is little social intimacy or mutual understanding 'and 'based on some interest or activity', and whose 'members interact on the basis of some specific roles.'

Characteristics of Secondary Group

1. Dominance of secondary relations: Secondary group relations can be seen in reference to primary relations. Secondary group relations are impersonal, indirect, non-inclusive and utilitarian. Members are connected to each other through contractual obligations or interests. Due to self-interest, individuality develops among the members.
2. Voluntary membership: Individuals are free to join or leave the group at any point of time i.e. membership of these groups are predominantly voluntary. But in case of secondary groups like 'state', membership becomes compulsory.
3. Large in Size: Unlike a primary group, physical proximity is not the condition for secondary group and so size of secondary group becomes large. They might spread all over the world. For example, members of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) are scattered all over the world.
4. Goal Oriented: Secondary groups are formed in order to fulfill the needs of the individuals. They serve the special functions in the society. Every secondary group emerges in response to specific purpose and joins the people having same type of need.
5. Indirect communication: Mode of communication among the members of secondary group is indirect. In many of the cases, group members seldom or rarely or never come into direct contact to each other. They rely on different forms of mass media communication which include radio, telephone, television, newspaper, movies, magazines, post and telegraph etc.
6. Role decides a person's position: In secondary groups, position of a person depends upon his role. Socially achieved status and its corresponding role remains the key factor behind the position of a person in the secondary group. His position is not being decided by his ascribed status neither he is treated on the basis of his birth.

WG Sumner has classified social groups in two types

- In-group
- Out-group

In-group

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-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.

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 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.

Classification by MacIver and Page

According to MacIver 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

Conclusion: