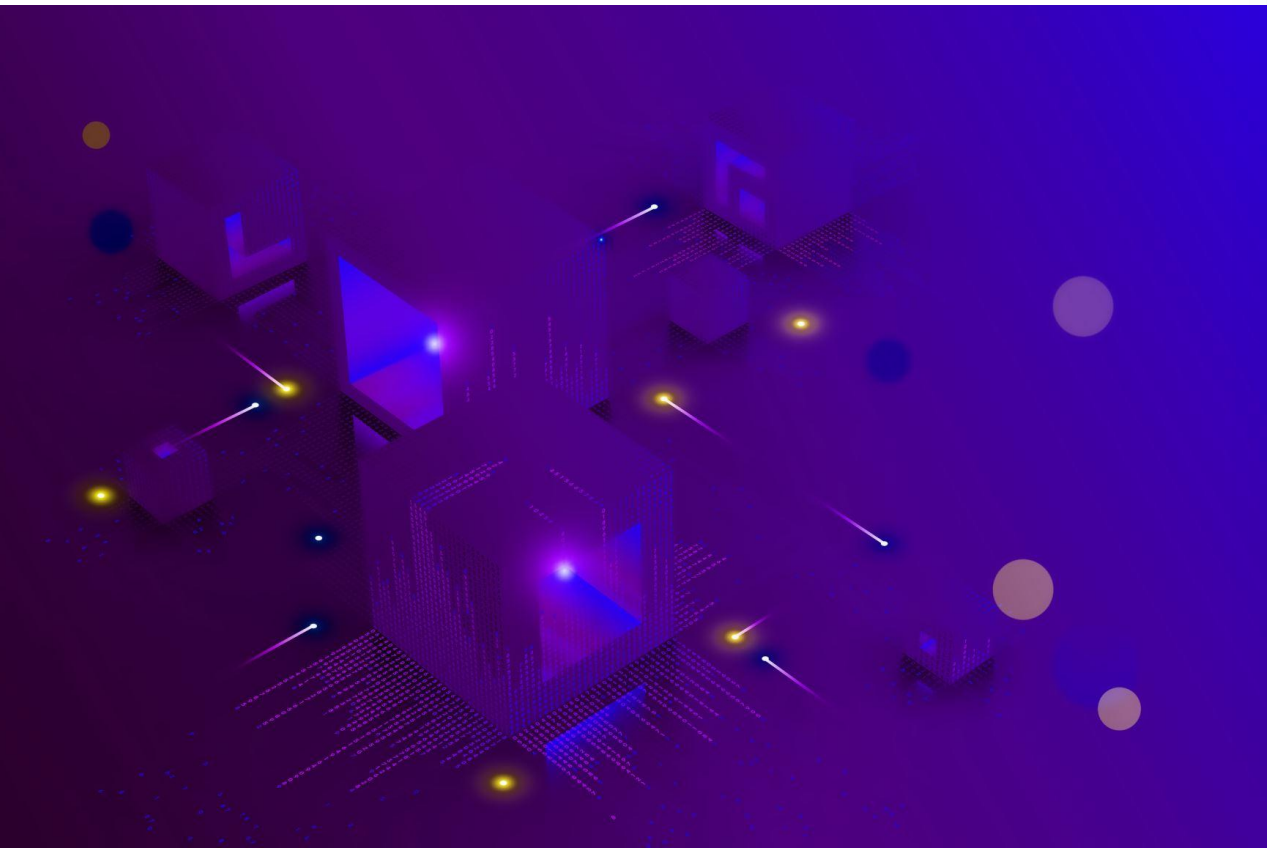


Unit : 02

Topic: Social Group



SYM 101

Sociological Concepts

Content

Formation of Group

Meaning and Definition of Social Group

Nature of Social Group

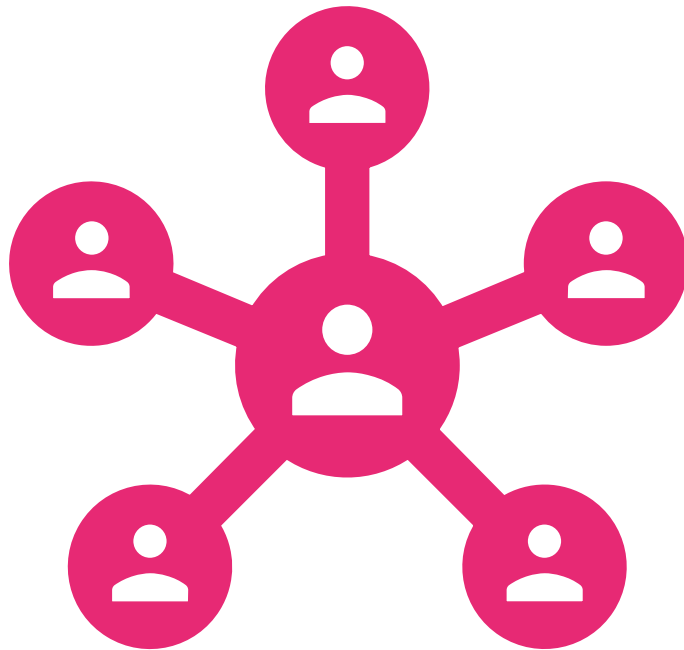
Characteristics of Social Group

Primary Group and Secondary Group

In Group and Out Group

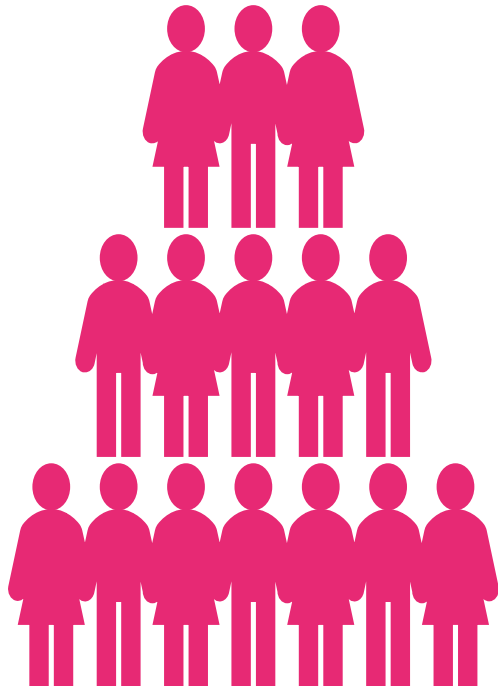
Reference Group

Introduction



Sociology is the study of social relations. It is primarily concerned with social groups. A man cannot be social by himself unless he has previously lived with others. Man's life is to an enormous extent a group life. The groups we belong to are not of equal importance to us. Some groups tend to influence many aspects of our lives and bring us into personal and familiar association with others. According to **Susan A. Wheelman's** perspective: "Groups are very real.... Groups influence our thoughts... and behavior even when we are alone Groups expand or limit our personal choices and even the contents of our minds... Forces that are so powerful cannot be ignored or denied".

Formation of Group



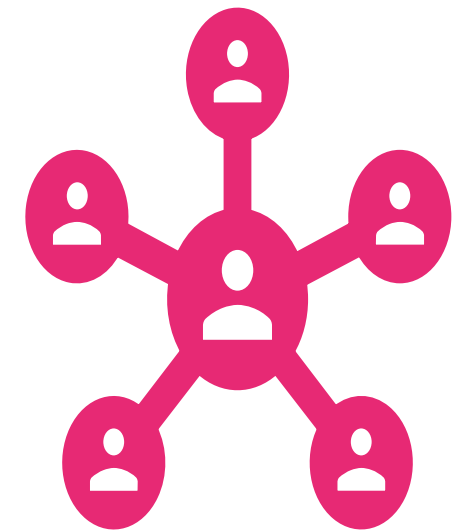
Groups are formed in order to satisfy human needs. Man's basic need is his survival, and the family is an illustration of such a group, which serves to meet this need; without the help of others the human infant would perish. Groups also provide many activities, which would not be possible by a lone individual. It takes twenty-two men to play football, and it takes many thousands to support a fair. We derive such satisfaction from groups that group affiliation itself becomes precious to us. We want to feel that we belong to certain groups and that these groups accept us. In this way, groups provide us with security and fellowship. However, formation of a group depends upon specific purpose.

Meaning of Social Group

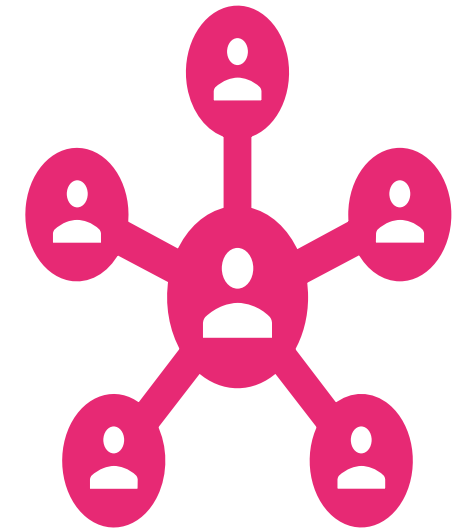


Ordinarily by social group we mean a collection of human beings. But the term social refers to social relationships or shared behaviors. **E.S. Bogardus** explain that the term “group refers to a number of units of anything in close proximity with one another”. Accordingly, it may refer to a group of trees, a group of houses, a group of horses etc. But in case of human beings as **MacIver and Page** says a group refers to “any collection of human beings who are brought into social relationships with one another”. Accordingly, a social group is a collection of interacting individuals who participate in similar activities and have a consciousness of joint interaction. There exists some degree of reciprocity and mutual awareness among the individuals.

A social group is an organized 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 fulfilment of common aims**.



But to have a complete understanding of the term social **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.





Nature of Social Group

The concept of group is different from other related concepts of aggregate and social category. Aggregates are simply collection of people who are in the same place at the same time, but share no definite connection with one another. For example, all college females who wear glasses are an aggregate, as are all males over six feet tall. To use **Erving Goffman's** phrase, aggregates are gatherings of people in unfocused interaction with one another. Of course, within aggregates various kinds of group relationships may usually be found. However, unlike members of a group, the individuals who make up an aggregate neither interact with one another nor take one another into account.



Another is social category, which is a statistical grouping—people classified together on the basis of a particular characteristic they share, such as having the same level of income or beings in the same occupation. Social categories are quite frequently and regularly employed in sociological research. For instance, if we are interested in caste relations in India, we might need to analyse difference in average earning between lower castes and upper castes, regarding them as two distinct statistical categories.



To sum up, therefore, social group consists of individuals who interact with each other on a regular basis. Further, members of a group expect a certain type of behaviour from one another. Also groups differ in size, ranging from intimate associations, like a family to large collectivity such as a sports club.



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, 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.

Definition

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”.

According to A.W. Green, “A group is an aggregate of individuals which persists in time, which has one or more interests and activities in common which is organised”.

According to Horton and Hunt, “Groups are aggregates or categories of people who have a consciousness of membership and of interaction”.

According to **MacIver and Page** a social group is “any collection of human beings who are brought into human relationships with one another”.

According to **Williams**, “A social group is a given aggregate people playing inter-related roles and recognized by themselves or others as a unit of interaction”.

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”.



Characteristics of Social Group

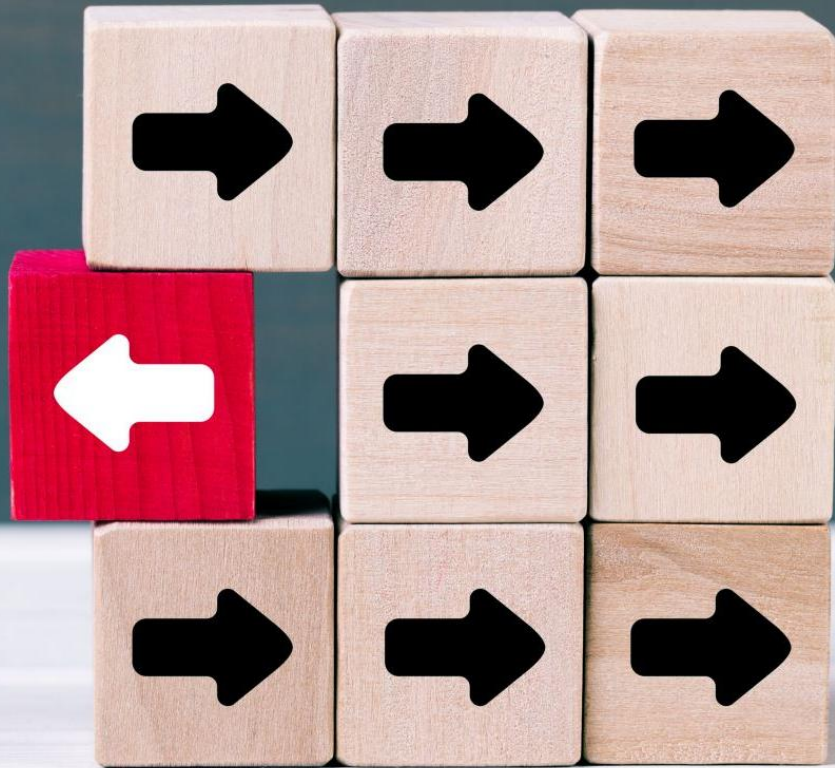
Given number of Individual

Reciprocal relations

Common Goals

Sense of Unity and
Solidarity

A strong Awe- feeling



Group Norms

Similar Behavior

Awareness

Group Control

Permanent or
Temporal

Classification of Groups

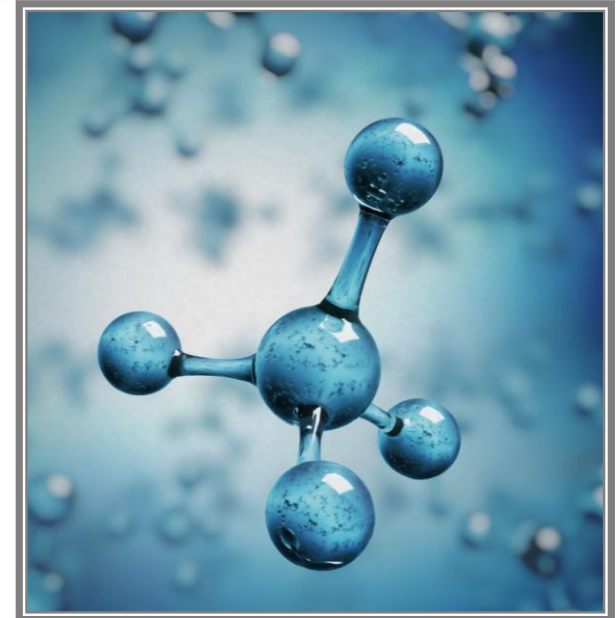
Different sociologists have classified groups in different ways. The chief bases of these classifications of groups are functions, scope and stability. George Simmel, Von Weis and Becker have taken number as basis. Tonnies has taken social interaction as a basis. Lowie and Malinowski have preferred age, sex, and other signs and Moirer has classified on the basis of blood-relations, place and actions. Similarly, the groups have been classified based on size, duration and choice.

Major Classification of Groups

Cooley's Classification - Primary and Secondary

Sumner's Classification – In group and Out Group

Sherif - Reference Group



Primary Group



In the classification of human groups, one of the broadest and most fundamental distinctions is that between small and intimate groups on the one hand, and large and impersonal groups, on the other. The origin of primary and secondary group conceptualization can be traced back to the work of **Charles H. Cooley (1909)**.

Primary Group

In his book **Social Organization**, Cooley used the term primary group to refer to small associations of people connected by ties of feelings. The family is an example of a primary group. Cooley explained that by primary groups he meant those characterized by intimate face-to-face association and cooperation. They are primary in several senses, but chiefly in that they are fundamental in forming the social nature and ideals of the nature. The result of the intimate association, psychologically, is a certain fusion of individuality in a common hold.'

External Feature of Primary Group

Physical Closeness
among the members

Small Size

Stability

Continuity in relations

Internal Characteristics of Primary Group

Common aims among the members

Relations are ends in themselves

Members have personal relations

Relations of members are inclusive

Maximum control over the members

Importance of Primary Group

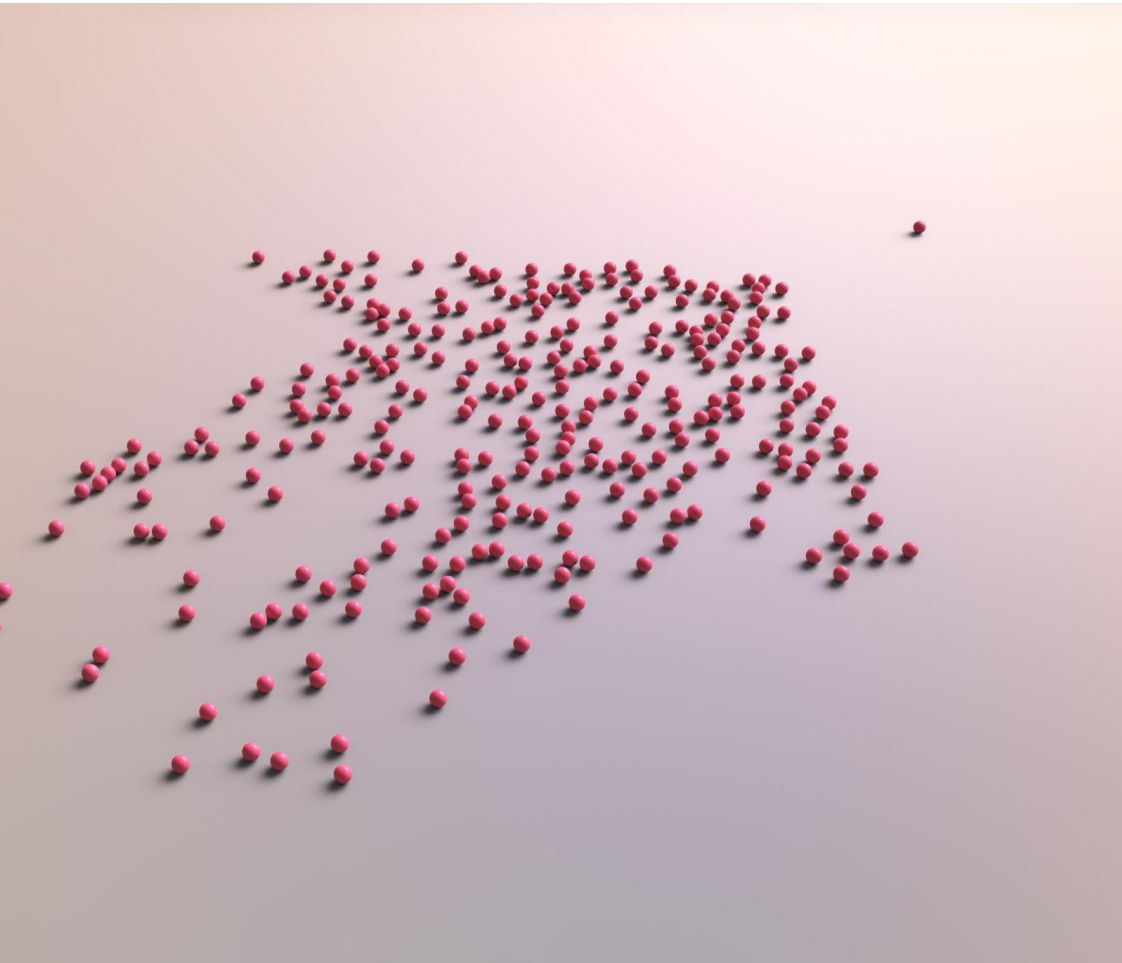


- Development of Personality
- Increase in efficiency
- Satisfaction of psychological needs

Secondary Group



Secondary groups are just the opposite of primary group, Impersonal; formal and indirect relationships exist among the members of secondary groups. The relationship among the members of club, professional group, political party or trade unions come under the category of secondary groups. These relationships are based on mutual interest. The basis of these relationships is in utility or common interests.



A secondary group is one where a number of people meet regularly, but their relationships are mainly impersonal. Individuals in secondary groups do not have intimate contact with each other, and normally come together for specific practical purpose only. A committee or club is a good example of a secondary group. Of course, in actual social situations, the distinction between primary and secondary groups is not clear-cut. People who regularly attend committee meetings together, for example, might become very friendly and spend time with one another informally.

Secondary groups are usually formal groups where special roles are required of members and where total personalities of individuals may not be brought into play. In such groups, goals are more specific and organisations more structured than in primary groups; also there is lesser intimacy and less personal interaction than in primary groups. Secondary groups are generally regulated by a set of formal rules; there is a formal authority set up with designated power and sharp division of labour. Within the orbit of secondary groups, it may also be possible to form primary groups. For example, in a football team, two players may develop an intimate friendship. The focus of their interaction may widen to include their entire selves.

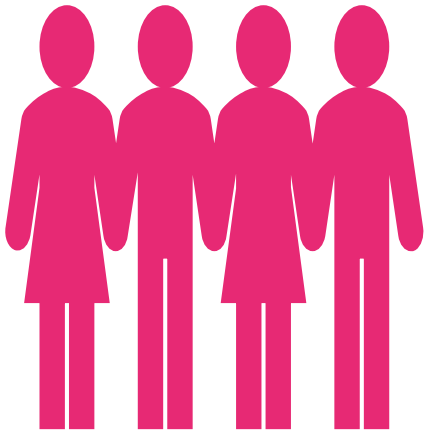


Features of Secondary Group

- Position of a person depends upon his/her role
- Individuality
- Self-dependence among members

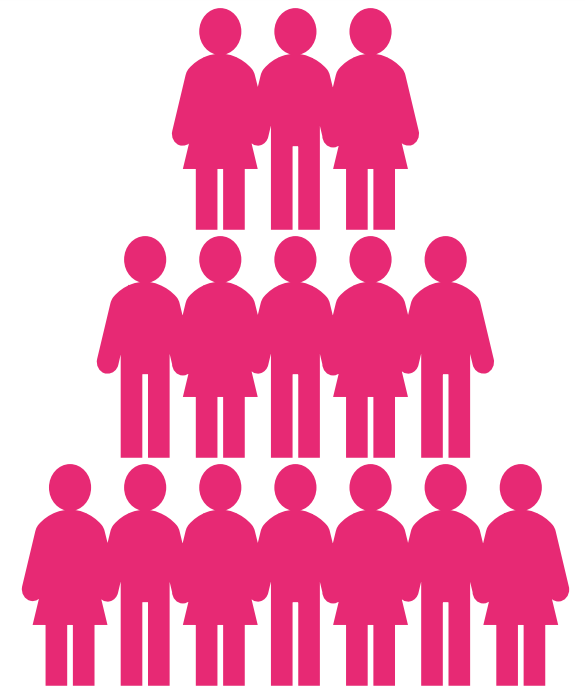


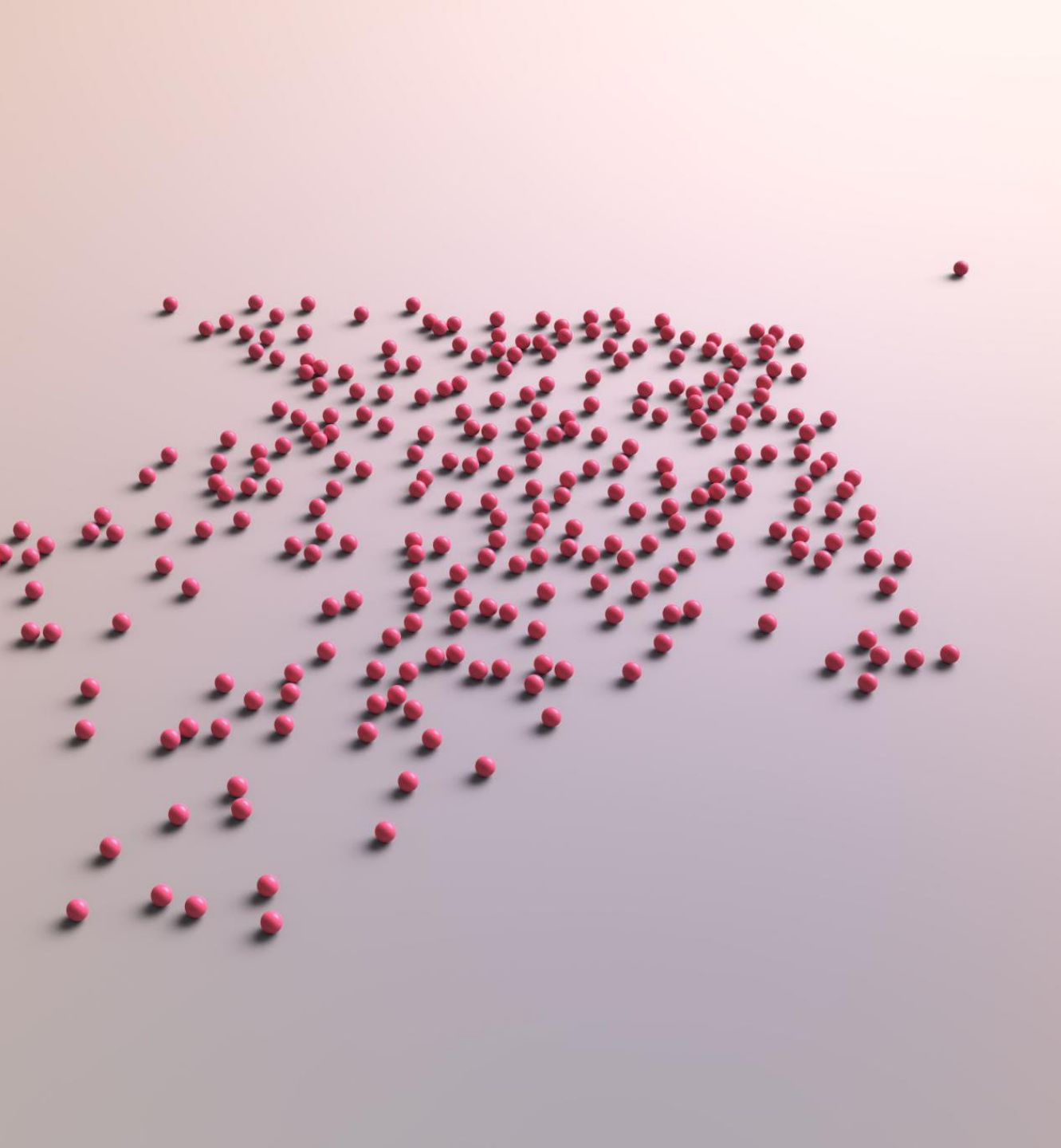
Ingroup and Out Group



In *Folkways*, **William Graham Sumner (1906)** described social groups in two ways: In-group and out-group. In-group and out-group are found in all societies. **'In-group' are 'we-group.'** as against the contrasting **'out-group' are 'they-group' or 'others-group.'** For any individual 'in-group' is the group to which he belongs whereas 'out-group' is one to which other than 'him' belong. In-groups and out-groups are of no specific size and may indeed be highly variable. The groups with which the individual identifies himself are his in-groups: family, tribe, sex, college, or occupation by virtue of one's awareness of likeness or consciousness of kind. Thus, in-group is a circle of people to which he or she belongs. In-group conveys a feeling of 'we', a sense of unity. The groups with which the individual identifies himself are his in-groups. An in-group acquires its consciousness of being from the exclusion of some persons as well as from the inclusion of other persons. These have tendency of **ethnocentrism**. An in-group may be as small as a family or as large as a society itself. The out-group, then, is simply everybody who is not in the family or not in the in-group.

In contrast, an **out-group** is a circle of people to which individual feels no sense of belonging. Out-groups convey a feeling of 'they' or 'those others'. For example, a tiller of the soil in India views his landlord as 'out-group'. It follows that out-group is defined by the individual with relation to the in-group, usually expressed in the contrast between 'we' and 'they' or 'other.' An in-group is simply the 'we group', an out-group, the 'they-group'. The in-group includes ourselves and anybody we happen to mean when we use the pronoun 'we'. The out-group, by subtraction, includes everybody else or, as we may somewhat paradoxically say, everybody who is excluded when we use the word 'we'.





We usually feel sympathy and attachment toward people in our in-group (the groups we belong to). For out-groups (groups we don't belong to), we always feel a sense of difference, and often some dislike. This dislike can be mild, like how fraternity members might feel about other college students, or very strong, like the deep divisions between higher and lower castes in some societies.



Every social group is an in-group for its members—the concept applies equally to the smallest clique and the largest aggregation of men so long as they are aware of their identity. Systematic study requires that we distinguish between the broad types of grouping that permeate the social structure. One such type is the primary group; the intimate face-to-face collectivity. A contrasting type is the large-scale association, the great impersonal organization of man. These two types are found in all complex societies, though their concrete manifestations assume a variety of forms.

Reference Group



Sherif use the term '**reference group**' for such groups that Individuals use as a standard for evaluating themselves and their own behaviour. These are the groups to which we psychologically identify with, to which we may and may not belong, but we may aspire to belong. People do not actually have to be members of the group to which they refer.

Definition of Reference Group



Mustafa Sherif (1953) defined reference groups as "those groups to which the individual relates himself as a part or to which he aspires to relate himself psychologically". This definition points clearly to the importance of defining the groups with which an individual identifies, whether or not he belongs to them. These are the groups whose values, standards and beliefs guide the person in carrying out one's actions and in evaluating oneself.

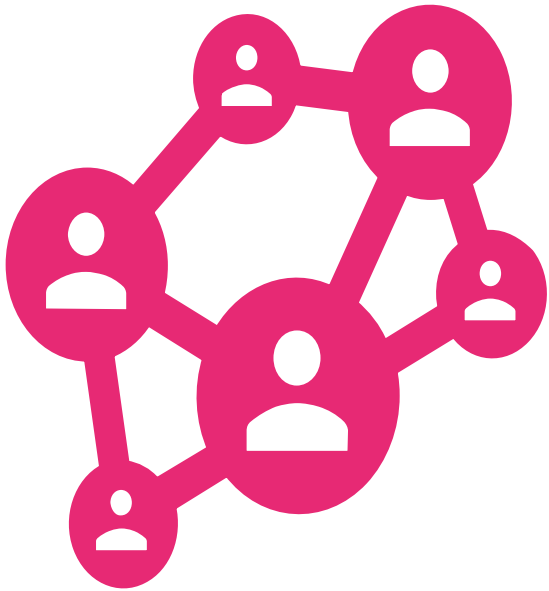
Development of Reference Group

The term '**reference group**' was coined by **Herbert Hyman** in **Archives of Psychology (1942)** to refer to the group against which individual evaluates his or her own situation or conduct. Hyman distinguished between a membership group to which people actually belong, and a reference group which is used as a basis for comparison and evaluation. A reference group may or may not be a membership group. Later on, Robert Merton and Alice Kitt (1950) refined the concept and provided a functionalist formulation of it. Their work was stimulated by Samuel Stouffer's *The American Soldier* (1949) in which the concept of relative deprivation was developed. Merton and Kitt point out that feeling of deprivation were less related to the actual degree of hardship they experienced, than to the living standards of the group to which they compared themselves. Thus, relative deprivation is a special case of comparative reference group behaviour. Merton later distinguished reference groups and interaction groups (in *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 1957).





The originator of this concept, Hyman found in his study of social class that people thought of as their status could not be predicted solely from such factors as income or level of education. To a certain extent, an individual's self-evaluation of status depended on the group used as a framework for judgement. In many cases, people model their behaviour after groups to which they do not belong.



Quite often, an individual is torn between the demands of a membership group to which he belongs but with which he does not identify and the motivational dictates of a reference group of which he is not a member. Social psychologists have termed this position as **marginality**. A familiar example is that of a principal of a private college who is officially a member of the management group but who identifies with the teachers on the college floor. This is a classic dilemma of the marginal man (principal) who seeks to join a reference group to which he is excluded and in doing so, he is rejected by the group to which he already belongs.

Types of Reference Group




**Positive Reference
Group**

**Negative Reference
Group**



Importance and Function

The concept of reference group is important for understanding socialisation, conformity, and how people perceive and evaluate themselves, especially in relation to the self. Reference groups perform three basic functions:



They serve a normative function by setting and enforcing standards of conduct and belief. T. Newcomb (1953) writes: "The significant thing about a reference group is, in fact, that its norms provide frames of reference which actually influence the attitude and behaviour of a person."

They also perform a comparison function by serving as a standard against which people can measure themselves and others.



They serve not only as sources of current evaluation but also as sources of aspiration and goal attainment (as a means of anticipatory socialization). A person who chooses to become a professor or a lawyer begins to identify with that group and becomes socialized to have certain goals and expectations.



Thank You