6. Groups and Organizations

What are Group/ Social Group?

A social group consists of two or more people who regularly interact on the basis of mutual expectations and who share a common identity. It is easy to see from this definition that we all belong to many types of social groups: our families, our different friendship groups, the sociology class and other courses we attend, our workplaces, the clubs and organizations to which we belong, and so forth. Except in rare cases, it is difficult to imagine any of us living totally alone. Even people who live by themselves still interact with family members, coworkers, and friends and to this extent still have several group memberships.

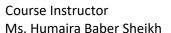**Difference between social category and social aggregate:**

It is important here to distinguish social groups from two related concepts: **social categories** and **social aggregates**.

A **social category** is a collection of individuals who have at least one attribute in common but otherwise do not necessarily interact. Women are an example of a social category. All women have at least one thing in common, their biological sex, even though they do not interact.

Asian Americans is another example of a social category, as all Asian Americans have two things in common, their ethnic background and their residence in the United States, even if they do not interact or share any other similarities. As these examples suggest, gender, race, and ethnicity are the basis for several social categories. Other common social categories are based on our religious preference, geographical residence, and social class.

Falling between a social category and a social group is the **social aggregate**, which is a collection of people who are in the same place at the same time but who otherwise do not necessarily interact, except in the most superficial of ways, or have anything else in common. The crowd at a sporting event and the audience at a movie or play are common examples of social aggregates. These collections of people are not a social category, because the people are together physically, and they are also not a group, because they do not really interact and do not have a common identity unrelated to being in the crowd or audience at that moment.

A **social aggregate** is a collection of people who are in the same place at the same time but who otherwise have nothing else in common. A crowd at a sporting event and the audience at a movie or play are examples of social aggregates.

Types of group:

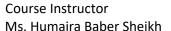Primary and Secondary Groups

Primary group

A common distinction is made between primary groups and secondary groups. A primary group is usually small, is characterized by extensive interaction and strong emotional ties, and endures over time. Members of such groups care a lot about each other and identify strongly with the group. Indeed, their membership in a primary group gives them much of their social identity. Charles Horton Cooley, whose looking-glass-self concept was discussed in "Social Structure and Social Interactio", called these groups primary, because they are the first groups we belong to and because they are so important for social life. **The family** is the primary group that comes most readily to mind, but small peer friendship groups, whether they are your high school friends, an urban street gang, or middle-aged adults who get together regularly, are also primary groups.

Although a **primary group** is usually small, somewhat larger groups can also act much like primary groups. Here athletic teams, fraternities, and sororities come to mind. Although these groups are larger than the typical family or small circle of friends, the emotional bonds their members form are often quite intense. In some workplaces, coworkers can get to know each other very well and become a friendship group in which the members discuss personal concerns and interact outside the workplace. To the extent this happens, small groups of coworkers can become primary groups .Our primary groups play significant roles in so much that we do.

Secondary Group

Although primary groups are the most important ones in our lives, we belong to many more secondary groups, which are groups that are larger and more impersonal and exist, often for a relatively short time, to achieve a specific purpose. **Secondary group** members feel less emotionally attached to each other than do primary group members and do not identify as much with their group nor feel as loyal to it. This does not mean secondary groups are unimportant, as society could not exist without them, but they still do not provide the potential emotional benefits for their members that primary groups ideally do. The sociology class for which you are reading this book is an example of a secondary group, as are the clubs and organizations on your campus to which you might belong. Other secondary groups include religious, business, governmental, and civic organizations. In some of these groups, members get to know each other better than in other secondary groups, but their emotional ties and intensity of interaction generally remain much weaker than in primary groups.

Reference Groups

Primary and secondary groups can act both as our reference groups and as groups that set a standard for guiding our own behavior and attitudes. The family we belong to obviously affects our actions and views, as**, for example**, there were probably times during your adolescence when you decided not to do certain things with your friends to avoid disappointing or upsetting your parents. On the other hand, your friends regularly acted during your adolescence as a reference group, and you probably dressed the way they did or did things with them, even against your parents' wishes, precisely because they were your reference group. Some of our reference groups are groups to which we do not belong but to which we nonetheless want to belong. A small child, for example, may dream of becoming an astronaut and dress like one and play like one. Some high school students may not belong to the "cool" clique in school but may still dress like the members of this clique, either in hopes of being accepted as a member or simply because they admire the dress and style of its members.

Samuel Stouffer (sociologist) and colleagues demonstrated the importance of reference groups in a well-known study of American soldiers during World War II. This study sought to determine why some soldiers were more likely than others to have low morale. Surprisingly, Stouffer found that the actual, "objective" nature of their living conditions affected their morale less than whether they felt other soldiers were better or worse off than they were. Even if their own living conditions were fairly good, they were likely to have low morale if they thought other soldiers were doing better. Another factor affecting their morale was whether they thought they had a good chance of being promoted. Soldiers in units with high promotion rates were, paradoxically, more pessimistic about their own chances of promotion than soldiers in units with low promotion rates. Evidently the former soldiers were dismayed by seeing so many other men in their unit getting promoted and felt worse off as a result. In each case, Stouffer concluded, the soldiers' views were shaped by their perceptions of what was happening in their reference group of other soldiers. They felt deprived relative to the experiences of the members of their reference group and adjusted their views accordingly. The concept of relative deprivation captures this process.

In-Groups and Out-Groups

Members of primary and some secondary groups feel loyal to those groups and take pride in belonging to them. We call such groups in-groups. Fraternities **(a group of people sharing a common profession or interests)**, sororities **(a society for female students in a university or college)**, sports teams, and juvenile gangs are examples of in-groups. Members of an in-group often end up competing with members of another group for various kinds of rewards. This other group is called an **out-group**. The competition between in-groups and out-groups is often

friendly, as among members of intramural teams during the academic year when they vie in athletic events. Sometimes, however, in-group members look down their noses at out-group members and even act very hostilely toward them. Rival fraternity members at several campuses have been known to get into fights and trash each other's houses. More seriously, street gangs attack each other, and hate groups such as **skinheads** and the **Ku Klux Klan** have committed violence against people of color, Jews, and other individuals they consider members of out-groups. As these examples make clear, in-group membership can promote very negative attitudes toward the out-groups with which the in-groups feel they are competing. These attitudes are especially likely to develop in times of rising unemployment and other types of economic distress, as in-group members are apt to blame out-group members for their economic problems.

Formal and In-Formal Groups

In an organization, the formation of groups is very natural, whether it is created by the management for the purpose of accomplishing the goals of the organization or by the members of the organizations themselves to fulfill their social needs. There are **two types of group**, namely, **formal groups** and **informal groups**. **Formal groups** are the ones that are created as per official authority, so as to fulfill the desired objective. Unlike, **informal groups** are formed by the employees as per their likes, interests, and attitudes.

The most common reason behind the creation of a group is the urge of people to talk and make their own circle, where they can interact freely, know each other, work hard and accomplish the tasks which are being assigned to them. In the given article, the differences between formal and informal groups are presented.

Key Differences between Formal and Informal Groups

The following are the differences between formal and informal groups:

- The groups formed by the management of the organisation for accomplishing a specific task are known as Formal Groups. The groups that are formed by the employees themselves as per their likes and prejudices is known as Informal Groups.
- The formal groups are deliberately created by the organisation, whereas the informal groups are established voluntarily.
- The formal groups are big in size as compared to an informal group. Moreover, there can be sub-groups in a single formal group.
- The structure of a formal group is designed in a hierarchical manner while the informal group lacks structure or say it has no structure.
- In a formal group, the position of a member defines its importance in the group, but in an informal group, every member is as important as any other member.

- In a formal group, the relationship between the members is professional, they gather just to accomplish the task allotted to them. On the other hand, in an informal group, there is a personal relationship between members, they share their opinions, experiences, problems, information with each other.
- In a formal group, the flow of communication is restricted due to the unity of command. In contrast to an informal group, the flow of communication stretches in all directions; there is no such restriction.

Ethnic Group

An **ethnic group** is a group of people who identify with each other through a common heritage, which generally consists of a common culture and shared language or dialect. The group's ethos or ideology may also stress common ancestry, religion, or race.

In the United States of America, the term "ethnic" carries a different meaning from how it is commonly used in some other countries. This is due to the historical and ongoing significance of racial distinctions that categorize together what might otherwise have been viewed as ethnic groups. For example, various ethnic, "national," or linguistic groups from Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands, Latin America, and Indigenous America have long been combined together as racial minority groups (currently designated as African American, Asian, Latino and Native American or American Indian, respectively).

While a sense of ethnic identity may coexist with racial identity (Chinese Americans among Asian or Irish American among European or White, for example), the long history of the United States as a settler, conqueror, and slave society, and the formal and informal inscription of racialized groupings into law and social stratification schemes has bestowed upon race a fundamental social identification role in the United States.

Caste Group

Caste is a form of social stratification characterized by hereditary transmission of a style of life which often includes an occupation, ritual status in a hierarchy, and customary social interaction and exclusion based on cultural notions of purity and pollution.

Pressure Group

Pressure groups may represent a powerful minority force in society and exert political influence to the detriment of the majority of society. This is an argument often leveled at trade unions and business groups. 2. Some pressure groups exert influence because of their financial position, membership or organization.

Vested Interest Group

It is social group which has its own ends. Mostly the economic benefits are the major aims. This one is for the sake of its aims does not interfere in government like the pressure group. But it has its own way by following the government.
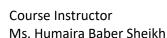
Leader Ship Styles

Leadership function refers to the main focus or goal of the leader. **An instrumental leader** is one who is goal-oriented and largely concerned with accomplishing set tasks. We can imagine that an army general or a Fortune 500 CEO would be an instrumental leader. In contrast, **expressive leaders** are more concerned with promoting emotional strength and health, and ensuring that people feel supported. Social and religious leaders—rabbis, priests, imams, directors of youth homes and social service programs—are often perceived as expressive leaders. There is a longstanding stereotype that men are more instrumental leaders, and women are more expressive leaders. And although gender roles have changed, even today many women and men who exhibit the opposite-gender manner can be seen as deviants and can encounter resistance. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's experiences provide an example of the way society reacts to a high-profile woman who is an instrumental leader. Despite the stereotype, Boatwright and Forrest (2000) have found that both men and women prefer leaders who use a combination of expressive and instrumental leadership.

In addition to these leadership functions, there are three different leadership styles. **Democratic leaders** encourage group participation in all decision making. They work hard to build consensus before choosing a course of action and moving forward. This type of leader is particularly common, for example, in a club where the members vote on which activities or projects to pursue. Democratic leaders can be well liked, but there is often a danger that the danger will proceed slowly since consensus building is time-consuming. A further risk is that group members might pick sides and entrench themselves into opposing factions rather than reaching a solution.

 In contrast, **a laissez-faire leader** (French for "leave it alone") is hands-off, allowing group members to self-manage and make their own decisions. An **example** of this kind of leader might be an art teacher who opens the art cupboard, leaves materials on the shelves, and tells students to help themselves and make some art. While this style can work well with highly motivated and mature participants who have clear goals and guidelines, it risks group dissolution and a lack of progress.

As the name suggests, **authoritarian leaders** issue orders and assigns tasks. These leaders are clear instrumental leaders with a strong focus on meeting goals. Often, entrepreneurs fall into

this mold, like Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. Not surprisingly, the authoritarian leader risks alienating the workers. There are times, however, when this style of leadership can be required. In different circumstances, each of these leadership styles can be effective and successful.

Studies of Group Behavior

Group behavior in sociology refers to the situations where people interact in large or small groups. ... Groups of a large number of people in a given area may act simultaneously to achieve a goal that differs from what individuals would do acting alone, called herd (group) behavior.

Five (5) Stages of Group Development

Psychologist Bruce Tuckman developed his group development model in 1965 to explain how healthy teams cohere over time. Tuckman's model identifies the five stages through which groups progress: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Each of the five stages of team development represents a step on the team-building ladder. As the group members climb the ladder, they morph from a random assembly of strangers into a high-performing team that can work toward a common goal. **Here are Tuckman's five stages of group development explained in detail:**

The forming stage of group development: The forming stage is the first stage in Tuckman's stages of group development and is a similar experience to your first day on a new job or at a new school. In this phase, most group members are overly polite and are still extremely excited about what their future may hold. Since the group dynamics and team roles aren't yet established, the team leader will often take charge to direct the individual members. During Tuckman's forming phase, new team members may discuss team goals, ground rules, and individual roles, but since this stage of development prioritizes people over the actual work, it's unlikely the team will be high-performing at this time.

The storming stage of group development: The storming phase is like when you reach that point with a new roommate where you begin to notice their small idiosyncrasies that get on your nerves. For teams, the conflict often arises due to clashing working styles between team members. Some people may start to even doubt the team's goals discussed in the earlier stage and will stop performing their necessary jobs altogether. This has a negative and stressful effect on those who keep up the hard work since the pre-established group processes no longer function smoothly. Some project teams think they can skip this stage, but it's better to acknowledge conflicts now and work them out rather than avoiding them until they explode.

The norming stage of group development: The next of Tuckman's stages is the norming phase. This is when the team moves past their previous quarrels and begins to recognize and value their teammates' strengths. During this stage, team members increasingly respect those who are in leadership roles. Now that everyone has begun to bond and familiarize themselves with the team processes, teammates feel comfortable giving each other constructive feedback as they work toward accomplishing new tasks. Since these new tasks often come with a high degree of difficulty, it is not uncommon for groups to regress back into the storming phase. Even if a group slides back into old behavior, members' new decision-making skills will make conflicts easier to resolve than they were during the initial storming phase.
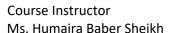
The performing stage of group development: The performing phase is the happiest of all the stages of development. In this stage, your team performance is at an all-time high. This high-performance level means all team members are self-reliant and confident enough in their own problem-solving skills that they can function without oversight from the leaders. Everyone is working like a well-oiled machine, free of conflict and moving in sync toward the same end goal.

The adjourning stage of group development: The fifth stage of Tuckman's development sequence is the adjourning phase. This final stage actually wasn't added to the Tuckman model until 1977, and it is the most melancholy of all the stages of team formation. The adjourning phase assumes that project teams only exist for a set period of time; once the team's mission is accomplished, the team itself dissolves. You can equate this stage to a breakup since team members often find it difficult to separate from people with whom they've formed close bonds. In fact, this phase is also sometimes known as the "mourning phase" because it is common for team members to experience a feeling of loss when the group is disbanded.

Formal Organization and Its Types

A complaint of modern life is that society is dominated by large and impersonal secondary organizations. From schools to businesses to healthcare to government, these organizations, referred to as formal organizations, are highly bureaucratized. Indeed, all formal organizations are, or likely will become, bureaucracies.

 A bureaucracy is an ideal type of formal organization. Ideal doesn't mean "best" in its sociological usage; it refers to a general model that describes a collection of characteristics, or a type that could describe most examples of the item under discussion. **For example**, if your professor were to tell the class to picture a car in their minds, most students will picture a car that shares a set of characteristics: four wheels, a windshield, and so on. Everyone's car will be somewhat different, however. Some might picture a two-door sports car while others picture an SUV. The general idea of the car that everyone shares is the ideal type. We will discuss bureaucracies as an ideal type of organization.

Types of Formal Organizations

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1975) posited that formal organizations fall into three categories.

Normative organizations, also called **voluntary organizations**, are based on shared interests. As the name suggests, joining them is voluntary and typically done because people find membership rewarding in an intangible way. The Audubon Society and a ski club are examples of normative organizations.

Coercive organizations are groups that we must be coerced, or pushed, to join. These may include prison or a rehabilitation center. Symbolic interactionist Erving Goffman states that most coercive organizations are total institutions (1961). A total institution is one in which inmates or a military soldier lives a controlled lifestyle and in which total resocialization takes place.

The third type is **utilitarian organizations**, which, as the name suggests, are joined because of the need for a specific material reward. High school and the workplace fall into this category—one joined in pursuit of a diploma, the other in order to make money.

Table of Formal Organizations. This table shows Etzioni's three types of formal organizations. (Table courtesy of Etzioni 1975)

Normative or Voluntary	Coercive	Utilitarian
Benefit of Membership	Intangible benefit	Corrective benefit
Type of Membership	Volunteer basis	Required
Feeling of Connectedness	Shared affinity	No affinity

Bureaucracies

Bureaucracies are an **ideal type** of formal organization. Pioneer sociologist **Max Weber** popularly characterized a bureaucracy as having a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labor, explicit rules, and impersonality (1922). People often complain about bureaucracies—declaring them slow, rule-bound, difficult to navigate, and unfriendly. Let's take a look at terms that define a bureaucracy to understand what they mean.

Hierarchy of authority refers to the aspect of bureaucracy that places one individual or office in charge of another, who in turn must answer to her own superiors. **For example**, as an employee at Walmart, your shift manager assigns you tasks. Your shift manager answers to his store manager, who must answer to her regional manager, and so on in a chain of command, up to the CEO who must answer to the board members, who in turn answer to the stockholders. Everyone in this bureaucracy follows the chain of command.

A clear division of labor refers to the fact that within a bureaucracy, each individual has a specialized task to perform. **For example**, psychology professors teach psychology, but they do not attempt to provide students with financial aid forms. In this case, it is a clear and commonsense division. But what about in a restaurant where food is backed up in the kitchen and a hostess is standing nearby texting on her phone? Her job is to seat customers, not to deliver food. Is this a smart division of labor?

The existence of explicit (clear) rules refers to the way in which rules are outlined, written down, and standardized. **For example**, at your college or university, the student guidelines are contained within the Student Handbook. As technology changes and campuses encounter new concerns like cyberbullying, identity theft, and other hot-button issues, organizations are scrambling to ensure their explicit rules cover these emerging topics.

Finally, bureaucracies are also characterized by **impersonality**, which takes personal feelings out of professional situations. This characteristic grew, to some extent, out of a desire to protect organizations from nepotism, backroom deals, and other types of favoritism, simultaneously protecting customers and others served by the organization. Impersonality is an attempt by large formal organizations to protect their members. Large business organizations like Walmart often situate themselves as bureaucracies. This allows them to effectively and efficiently serve volumes of customers quickly and with affordable products. This results in an impersonal organization. Customers frequently complain that stores like Walmart care little about individuals, other businesses, and the community at large.

Bureaucracies are, in theory at least, **meritocracies**, meaning that hiring and promotion is based on proven and documented skills, rather than on nepotism or random choice. In order to get into a prestigious college, you need to perform well on the SAT and have an impressive transcript. In order to become a lawyer and represent clients, you must graduate law school and pass the state bar exam. Of course, there are many well-documented examples of success by those who did not proceed through traditional meritocracies. Think about technology companies with founders who dropped out of college, or performers who became famous after a YouTube video went viral.

Groups, Gangs, Mafia & their Implication for Society

Contemporary gangs—variously known as youth or delinquent gangs and street or criminal gangs—have become a widespread threat to communities throughout the Nation. Once considered largely an urban phenomenon, gangs have increasingly emerged in smaller communities, presenting a challenge that severely strains local resources.

All gang problems are local in nature. Whether rooted in neighborhoods, representing a rite of passage, or providing surrogate families or access to economic opportunity, most gangs are inherently local. Even large-scale gangs with reputed nationwide networks attract local youth and take advantage of local opportunities to carry out gang activities.

The media, the public, and community agencies use the term "gang" more loosely than the law enforcement community. Politicians and law enforcement officials tend to rely on legal parameters such as criminal behavior to define what constitutes a gang. Unfortunately, this perception fails to recognize that many gangs do not engage solely in criminal acts, or even highly visible ones. Compounding the definition problem is the inconsistent use of the term "gang related." Police may classify an incident as gang related simply because the individual involved is a gang member. There is no consensus on a standardized definition of a gang, but there is some agreement on the basic elements. Maxson and Klein developed **three criteria** for defining a street gang:

❏ Community recognition of the group.

❏ The group's recognition of itself as a distinct group of adolescents or young adults.

❏ The group's involvement in enough illegal activities to get a consistent negative response from law enforcement and neighborhood residents.