

## **Social Groups: Features, Types of Group and Their Goals** by Amit Mudra

### **Introduction:**

When human beings enter into any relationship with each other, the bond that they create with the help of such relationships in each case becomes a social unit. The social units may first take the shape of groups and then enlarge themselves into social associations. Thus, a family would be a group for any individual, while the state itself or any business activity may become an association.

The groups and the associations together form the society; and if societies, as represented by different nations, evolve a system of working together, a supranational society comes into existence. This is the fashion in which different social systems operate in this world.

Therefore, families, clubs, political, economic and religious associations together form a society, like the Indian society or the American society, and each such society is a distinct social system. We endeavor in this modern world to bring together the different societies under a structure of humanity. Whether we do succeed in this regard or not, a comparative study of the different social systems has helped us to understand mankind better.

Gisbert recognizes the collection in the group, but adds that members of a group perform their functions through a recognized organization, as in the cases of a football club or a political party. It is to be noted in this context that a mere collection of individuals does not make a group. If such individuals do not have any awareness of the fact of a relationship existing between each other, the group cannot come into existence.

Therefore, persons in very close proximity with each other, and travelling by a common public transport at a time, cannot form a group. But as soon as a consciousness arises that they are related with each other, either through a common social organization or for achieving a common goal, they form themselves into a group.

A Sunday congregation in a church or a cluster of persons waiting in front of a public board for election results to be announced will in each case be a group. It is often said that a group is not a mere mechanical collection of human beings; it is a collection that manifests a psycho-social unity among its members.

### **Features of Social group:**

#### **The social group, therefore, can be taken to possess the following characteristics:**

(1) Its members have an awareness of 'unity' among themselves, and this unity demands that, on the one hand, no member shall act at his own will and own will only and, on the other, that every member shall collectively function for the interests of the groups.

(2) The group comes to possess some degrees of power to exercise its 'pressure' upon its members; and these pressures may be exerted either directly or indirectly upon any individual who would not conform to the group standards or group ideals.

(3) 'Reciprocity' becomes the very basis of group activity, and each member is required to respond to the calls and needs of the other. In a family, therefore, not only must the child learn to obey and respect the parent, the latter must also reciprocate by looking to the child's needs, those that he requires for his sustenance as also those that help in his mental development.

(4) The consciousness that members of a group belong to each other, or, at least for each other's interests, must necessarily evoke in them a 'group feeling' or a group spirit, an esprit de corps, which stands out prominently not so much in their dealings with each other as in the shape of a closed feeling against all persons who are not a member of such group. There is, therefore, that 'we-feeling' against a 'they-feeling' creating a division between members who belong to the 'in-group' and persons who form the 'out-group'.

(5) Animals, too, live in groups out of sheer necessity and, in the case of the primitive man too, his desire for belonging to a group was based purely on biological reasons and reasons for security. In the modern world, man with his language, tradition and heritage, can to a great extent choose the particular group to

which he would like to belong. Today's groups are becoming in this sense, more voluntary than involuntary.

### **Social Aggregates and Categories:**

If a number of individuals collect at a place, say, to watch the Republic day parade or to see the Prime Minister and her entourage pass by, there exists no relationship between such persons. Such individuals then form a 'social aggregate', and not a social group. The difference between the two is that while in the former case its members do not establish a relationship between themselves or work for a common goal, the relationship or the goal or both exist with a group.

A 'social category' is not an aggregate in the sense that they are a collection of individuals. A category may exist even if its components are not physically concentrated together. It is a class of persons who are distinguished from the rest in the society by a certain status that is ascribed to them. Artists, doctors, film stars and all bachelor persons form in each division a social category.

Members of a category may not be related with each other on the basis of a social group. One film actor may have no relation whatsoever with another, and there may be no desire in them to work together for a common purpose; yet they shall form a social category and the absence of a relationship or a goal will prevent them from becoming a group. But as soon as these two actors form an association for securing their rights in the film industry, they become members of a social group.

They are, as a social category, not a social aggregate even when they cluster together in a party; but they can, without the mark of their status, become a part of the social aggregate when they crowd together with others to watch an event. Cinema goers as a class form a social category, distinct from those in society who abjure films as a means of entertainment; but the audience at a particular show are an aggregate. It may be noted that each person belongs to a family; and, in this sense, a member of a category or an aggregate automatically forms part of one group or the other.

## **Types of Groups:**

Sociologists are not all of the same view as regards the types of social groups that may be found in a society. The most commonly accepted division, made by C.H. Cooley, is between the primary and the secondary groups. Others note the contiguous and the non-contiguous, the voluntary and the in-voluntary, the formal and the informal, and reference groups.

## **The different types of groups are discussed below:**

### **(i) Primary and Secondary Groups:**

#### **Primary Groups:**

A 'primary group' has been described as a 'face-to-face' group since members in it have a direct and close contact with each other. According to McIver, the primary group is the very nucleus of all social organizations, particularly when it assumes the shape of the family. Members of a family, children's play-groups and persons belonging to a locality develop such intense feelings among themselves that they easily fall into primary groups.

When relations between individuals in any group or unit are not very close and direct, when a group-spirit or a group-consciousness exists with the difference that none of the members of such group has necessarily a direct relation with the other, the group may be described as a 'secondary group'. Political parties, students' unions or labor units, businessmen's guilds etc. can well be described as secondary groups.

#### **A primary group must, therefore, possess certain characteristics:**

(1) As McIver puts it, there is a quality of 'spontaneity' among the members of a primary group. Family members, groups of close friends or young-men of a locality feel very free with each other, and on their own initiative they come together for discussions, gossip or mere recreation.

This element of spontaneity helps at times in establishing primary groups within certain secondary units. For example, in a business house the staff and the management are woven together only in an indirect and a secondary relationship. But within this secondary group there may exist a smaller clique or coterie of workers who combine for some specific purpose or the other, and the informality of their relations will form them into a primary group.

(2) Membership of primary groups is naturally 'limited', since a direct participation of a large number of persons in any activity or in building up a relationship is not practicable. Even the attitudes of the members of these groups towards various cultural pursuits must be similar, or else the relations easily get strained. If a man and his wife do not learn to see eye to eye over most matters that concern a common home, the married relationship between the two is certainly not without its threats.

(3) Primary groups being the very nucleus of society, these are 'universal' and for all times. There is not a single sphere of human activity in which we fail to notice the emergence of these groups. When lecturers from various background assemble in an educational institution, they no doubt former secondary groups, but sooner or later primary groups of the more intimate ones will develop, even though these groups continue to operate within the wider field of the secondary relationships.

(4) The primary groups are at the very base of the individuals' education as to love, affection, co-operation, generosity and humanism, and all education along this line will culminate in the establishment of an esprit-de-corps, a team spirit.

However, lowly the ambitions of gangsters may be, even among them they have a team spirit which generates the 'we-feeling' in the same lofty way as it grows among persons with nobler pursuits. Primary groups, therefore, generate very primary relationships among human beings that may be described as very 'personal', 'spontaneous' and 'voluntary'.

(5) Primary groups contribute largely to the process of socialization of the child before he enters the larger world as an adult. The child, as he grows, finds as his immediate neighbor the members of his family and his playmates. From the family members he learns his language, his cultural heritage and the role that he has to play first in the family and then in larger society.

This process has earlier been described as the process of socialization. Whether or not the child will express his feelings and, if he does, the degree of expression would be socially warranted under the circumstances, are all matters that he must learn to grasp, and his family is his first educator in the respect.

His playmates take him to yet another sphere of society. He learns that there are persons like him who should not be revered or respected like the father or the mother, but who are more directly responsive to his ideas and, perhaps, more sympathetic.

He learns to adjust and to share with his playmates and thereby becomes conscious of his social rights and obligations. A proper family environment and the right type of friends can help to a great extent the formation of a personality that would conform to the standards of the society.

The very closeness of relations that primary groups generate answer not only to the creature needs of an individual but also to his culture needs. This function of the primary group is so well performed that no other organization in society can take its place. An individual needs frankness in relations which help his instinct of self-expression and larger organizations like secondary groups cannot help him much in this respect.

However, the influence of these primary groups upon the secondary ones is of immense importance. All the training that an individual gets in a primary group radiates into a secondary group and inspires its functioning. Kingsley Davis observes that, without the primary groups, the secondary groups would be like trees without roots, doomed to fall and perish with their own weight and burden.

### **Secondary Groups:**

‘Secondary groups’ occupy a very important place in modern society. In primitive societies, when man’s activities admitted of no difference other than those prompted by difference in age or the sexes, primary groups were the order of the day.

Secondary groups hardly existed since the primary ones above could cater to the needs of the individual. As simple society turned into the more complex one, several activities enlarged the range of human action and, with division of labor and specialization, several secondary groups came into existence.

Different activities required different specialized agencies, and each of these specialized agencies formed the basis of a secondary group. Different associations

have now come into being as secondary groups in which individuals do not have direct or personal relations with each other.

**Secondary groups possess the following characteristics:**

(1) Each secondary group like a business association, a political party or a religious association is based on some interest, economic, political, cultural or otherwise. Without a 'distinct interest', no secondary group can come into existence.

(2) A secondary group is, therefore, much 'larger in composition' and wider in scope. As such, the relations between members of secondary groups tend to remain impersonal, indirect and formal. Individuals belonging to the group are bound together by common interests and not by spontaneous feelings. An individual in such a group neither directly and 'face-to-face' meets his comrade, nor is he interested in meeting all of them. He is rather concerned with the achievement of his goal, for it is the goal and not the individuals that has created the group.

(3) Relations between members of a secondary group are by and large contractual. 'Contracts and conventions' determine the rights and obligations of every member, and the understanding by him of such contractual or conventional constraints must be very clear. Mechanical observance of these knits the group together, but no element of spontaneity exists with it.

Even the rules and regulations that are framed for securing the loyalty of the members to the group and in harmonizing its organized activities are drafted with deliberation and, therefore, they are indirect and impersonal.

(4) Members of large organizations participate in a common activity or enterprise. There is interdependence in such activities, as in a commercial house or an educational institution. In a business house, the work of every worker collectively designs out the whole fabric and, in an educational institution; too, the teachers' efforts are dependent upon the co-operative attitudes of students.

When we analyze the co-operation that one finds in primary groups, we find that the participants engage in direct cooperation; but in a secondary group, co-operation is clearly indirect and impersonal.

(5) Secondary groups are of 'larger duration' than the primary ones. The family and the childhood playmates exist for an individual for a short period of time only and, sooner or later, the children are no longer children and the individual loses the guidance of the members of his family.

The tutelage period in life is short; and a greater part of individual life is devoted to participation in impersonal secondary groups. The child enters a secondary group after spending his formative years in the midst of primary groups; and as such his membership in the secondary ones will be conditioned by his training and education in the primary ones.

There may not be a whole truth in the statement that 'the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world', but the rocking hand definitely shapes the personality of the individual who, later in life, is confronted with the demands of the larger impersonal organizations of which he chooses to become a member. Since the individual spends a better part of his life in the midst of secondary groups, the norms and ideals of these groups mold his personality in later life.

(6) The close and intimate primary group allows an individual only a limited vision of life. In the family, the child develops the understanding that every woman is like his mother and every decent male like his father. When he enters the secondary groups, he gains a wider experience of life, comes to know of a variety of individuals, his experiences become variegated and the perspective of life changes for him positively and absolutely.

On the one hand, he learns to expand himself and his ideals from the narrow, limited regions of life and, on the other, an enlarged personality helps him to gain confidence through determination and consciousness of his role in society. People living in villages acquire a sense of security by living in close proximity with each other.

In cities, life is impersonal and unsympathetic and it is here that an individual requires the membership of different secondary groups for boosting up his sense of security. He comes to know that he is a part of the game and, therefore, not lonely. In order to accentuate this sense of security, associations hold meetings, get-togethers and various programs from time to time; and even these impersonal



arrangements have their beneficial influences in the otherwise cold, apathetic city life.

Besides that, relations begun impersonally in secondary groups do not tend to remain as such; in different divisions and segments, they lead to the formation of closely-linked primary groups based on direct feelings and personal understandings. At times, these primary relations within secondary groups can be the cause of instability of these groups.

**(ii) The In-Group and the Out-Group:**

W.G. Sumner makes a twofold division of society into the in-group and the out-group. Members of the in-group have very close relations with each other and their loyalty to the group and to each other is very pronounced. The group-feeling or the group-spirit makes the members of this group very conscious of the fact that they belong together, as in the case of family members, persons who share common living surroundings, or persons who belong to a particular nation.

The Basis of this intimate relationship is the sharing of certain common ideas or a feeling that the social heritage is common. The in-group exists anywhere, and with further ramifications too. Boys of a public school belong to an in-group and even within such group there may be a closer group of boys who belong to a particular form or standard.

The out-group stands in contrast with the in-group and, unless one views the former in the context of the latter, it has no existence whatsoever. No individual as such may belong to an out-group; but an individual belonging to an in-group may consider certain others to be belonging to an out-group.

The out-group would stand for a collection of individuals for whom a set of individuals have a feeling of dislike, animosity or even hostility or hatred. Instead of hatred or dislike, there may exist a mere feeling of strangeness towards a group and even that would create an out- group.

For example, members of a certain family find the members of another a bit strange; this feeling itself divides the families into an in-group and an out-group. People belonging to different localities, different nations and different

communities likewise carve out for themselves a division into in-groups and out-groups.

**(iii) The Formal Group and the Informal Group:**

Some sociologists notice a factor that characterizes groups as formal and informal ones, according to the 'rules of behavior' that govern them. In an 'informal group', the rules of behavior or the codes that determine the relationship of individuals comprising it are not fixed or determined by any process of deliberation.

Friends, lovers and married couples easily fall into the informal group, for these persons can determine the pattern of their relationship by mutual adjustment, though such adjustments must be made within the norms set by society. Yet the limits within which they can travel are elastic and personal variations are admitted. 'Formal groups' are, on the other hand, based on rules that are more or less rigid and, once set down by society, the scope for variations is very limited.

Formality and impersonality determine the basis of the relationship, as in the cases of the employer and the employee working together under a formal understanding, or the judge administering justice in a court of law with the help of the arguments made by the advocates of the parties.

Certain definite norms apply to these relationships; but should it so happen that the employer and the employee meet at a wedding reception and participate in the gaieties, they constitute, at least temporarily, an informal group.

**(iv) The Voluntary Group and the Involuntary Group:**

Members of a family do not belong to a group out of any deliberate choice made by them; when a child is born in a family, from his own side and also from the side of others in the family his inclusion in it is a matter-of-fact affair, upon which no deliberate decision can be taken. Similarly, if a person is born a Bengali or a Punjabi, in the natural course of things he belongs to the Bengali or the Punjabi community and there arises no question of making a choice in this regard.

The family and the community to which one belongs is an involuntary group, the membership of which is automatic and beyond arguments. A voluntary group, on the other hand, is one which is constituted with a pre-meditated and a deliberate

objective. Political parties, labor unions, sports clubs and even social clubs are voluntary groups, and no individual is required compulsorily to enter these bodies.

**(v) Other Groups:**

Different sociologists have made distinctions between groups according to different principles and some of these should, of necessity, be taken into consideration. For example, there is the contiguous group and the non-contiguous one. A contiguous group' is based on physical contiguity, as a crowd that has collected to render help to certain persons in distress. It is also 'transitory' in the sense that it collects and then disperses.

A 'non-contiguous' group is a collection of individuals who are unified by certain ideals or beliefs, like persons belonging to an ethnic group or a particular religion, but living in different parts of the world. This type of group may be regarded as a 'permanent' group too, just as a family is.

Groups may be classified also as 'functional' as non-functional ones. In a functional group, the members seek to promote an objective, as in the cases of persons combining to run an educational institution or a charitable dispensary or for demonstrating against a particular government measure.

A family is a non-functional group as it serves certain social ends involuntarily, and not with a deliberate motive. Similarly, on the question of the presence or absence of internal organization among members, groups may be classified as 'organized' and 'unorganized' units.

The unorganized group is the crowd, for instance, that gets agitated over a man being run over by a motor vehicle. An organized group is one in which the members discipline themselves according to the demands of certain codes and, at times, under leadership.

A group of cricket spectators is an un leadered organized group, but legislators taking a whip before a session are a leadered and organized group. Organized groups may be developed with or without set rules as has just been considered. The organized group that operates with set rules may also be regarded as an 'institutional group'.

Groups may also be classified according to the 'principles of rigidity or flexibility' they adopt for their memberships. Some groups like to keep themselves segregated and their members are not free in mixing with those who belong to other groups.

Religious groups and prestige classes in society may maintain their distance from foreign elements, and in those groups one notices the absence of 'permeability of boundaries', as it has been described by some sociologists. Other groups may make provisions for permeability, that is, they may open out to strangers and admit them to their folds.

**(vi) Reference Groups:**

Modern society has changed the concept of individuality by modifying his standards of behavior according to the demands of his occupation. A man in present times is very likely to introduce himself as a nuclear physicist, a social worker or a stenographer.

The occupation has become so all pervading in his personality that his self cannot be separated from it and, when he is asked to dissociate himself from it, his senses flounder. Therefore, the individual seems to have accepted the standards of his occupation, by making a reference to which his own standards may be adjudged. This gives us the idea of a reference group.

This group is one which sets down certain standards, and any individual who belongs to it takes up those standards as his own. The occupation may not always be a contractual one; it may be hereby a social obligation like that of a mother. A woman may identify herself with the very concept of a mother and try to attain the standards of an ideal parent, just as a college student may be ostentatious in manners over his being a budding scientist.

The individual, therefore, takes the standards of the reference group in evaluating the important aspects of his life. According to Robert Merton in his (Social Theory and Social Structure p.287) the group to which an individual belongs can become a point of reference for shaping one's attitudes, evaluations and behavior.

### **Group Goals:**

Whatever the group that individuals may be members of, the group as such is always made the basis of a composite relationship between such individuals. The relationship that men have with each other is not devoid of interest; that is, every relationship has a set pattern that reflects the wishes of the persons who established it.

These wishes or interests express the goal that the group likes to follow; and we shall not be wrong if we modify the statement by saying that every individual enters a group with the idea of pursuing certain interests and the collective approach in the group enhances the chances of his success. The 'collective goals' of the individuals comprising the group can be taken as group goals.

McIver and Page outline certain interests in the context of each type of a social group, and these interests determine the goals of such social unity. For example, the primary group likes the family as well as the large associations like labor unions, the state or the church act with interest-conscious unities with definite organization in each group. But then interests in the family are basically different from those in a large association.

The family exists with limited membership based on personal relationship. Its interests are unified and all its members act in unison to further such interests. Sacrifices have to be made by some so that certain others prosper, but the prosperity of the latter shall be taken as prosperity of the family as a whole.

Associational interests on the other hand, are collective and impersonal; and in the furtherance of these interests, the demands are that each member shall exert himself to the fullest and conditions of sacrifices are not thought of. In large associations or organizations, competition is the main keynote of activity, while in a family accommodation; adjustment and tolerance coupled with affection modify the pursuit of interests.

However, in every collective effort there is first a clear understanding of collective interests before any actual exertion is made, and every interest thereby assumes a common meaning for every individual that appears to be enlarged and enriched. This understanding leads us to the idea of the 'group thought' or the 'group mind'.

It is argued by certain writers like the Psychologist, McDougall, that the mutual interactions of thoughts and desires of the members of a group introduces an element into such thoughts and desires that may be regarded as more than the mere sum total of their individual thought and desire. McDougall considers that the existence of a group mind is a distinct possibility. Yet writers like McIver do not admit such a proposition.

McIver feels that what passes as the group mind is perhaps the adjustment of individual interests or an expression of dominance of some over others.

**When he scans the process of making group decisions, he finds that any of the four processes are at work:**

**(A) Authority:**

Some individuals merely exercise their authority and make others submit to their will, which itself is now group-processed and branded as group thought.

**(B) Compromise:**

When two or more sections in a group are equally strong or important, each section makes some sacrifice in-order to accommodate the other's views and a compromise of views is arrived at. This is not really group thinking; certain views remain unreconciled with others and an advantageous bargaining is made by the sections on the basis of give-and-take.

**(C) Enumeration:**

Enumeration means counting heads and deciding the issue by applying the principle of majority. Voting takes place when agreement fails and enumeration itself does not settle problems; but since the members show their willingness to abide by the-majority view, as in a democratic set up, a decision can be taken.

**(D) Integration:**

This type of group decision shows the only real and the utmost stage of agreement among members. It means that members are all of one view, and the group decision does not imply the loss of ideals on the part of some and the corresponding gain by others. Integration can be taken more as an ideal than a realistic stage of decision-making in a group.

Whether or not it is conceded that a group-mind is the aggregate of thoughts and desires of individuals comprising it and that a group-decision is likewise a consensus of individual views, the performance and satisfaction of the 'group goal' involves basically individual efforts with the support of the group.

The group may decide upon a goal, which necessarily becomes the aim of the individual in life. The individual's efforts made in achieving the goal may have direct reflections upon his culture and personality. Where culture and personality are rooted in standard norms and views, the behavior of every individual will be traditional.

For example, in achieving the goal as in the case of economic competition, each will make a degree of a sacrifice and gain corresponding rewards for himself. When people 'behave' traditionally and rationally, it has been noticed that while individual sacrifices are not heavy, the group as a whole gains moderately. This would be the story of a family, a tribe or a nation when the ideal is to follow the traditional path, the dictates of ethics and rationality.

But as soon as some individual or certain groups like certain producers' associations 'deviate' from this path, their risks are high but the chances are that their rewards will be very high. In the satisfaction of goals the importance of the dictates of culture is great and it makes a world of difference whether or not the group, or individuals in it, likes to deviate from the accepted norms.

It is true that if accepted norms are followed, the group as a whole is benefitted; and if a deviation from them is made, the chances are that an individual will prosper. Some may prefer to have fair rewards by following the competitive approach, as a football player who plays for the team and feels happy about winning the game, even though he has not scored any goal.

But a player when he plays for himself excels in quality and obtains higher individual records, though the team as a whole does not attain much of success. Whether a player will follow the strict norms or deviate from them will depend on his personal and cultural qualities, as also on the type of the game that he is playing.

Unscrupulous behavior, therefore, is not unexpected in one's exertions made for the attainment of his goals. Robert Merton (in his Social Theory and Social Structure) states that if the cultural attitudes are that any person can make money as long as he has the requisite qualities, it would naturally follow that success or failure will depend on personal qualities and personal performance.

The person, who fails, therefore, brands him not only with the stigma of remaining behind but also with inability, and that has an effect upon his mental make-up. This measure of inability to reach the goal is described as the 'goal-means-discrepancy'.

Some may learn to adjust on the face of this discrepancy and modify their goals. Others must 'keep up with the Joneses' and, hence, some extra efforts are made to achieve the target. But Merton observes that the response of some would be to attain their goals by adopting illegitimate means.

A student who must not be let down before his colleagues on the ground of his inability to grasp principles must 'copy' during [examinations; and a person down the ladder in the social structure must come up fast, even though he has to adopt criminal means.

If the society does not offer any legitimate means to the individual for the fulfilment of his aspirations, he will be more likely to go astray than when he knows that the legitimate means will satisfy his I desires. Hence, it is important that social associations and institutions provide an individual with adequate means for attaining the goals set up by society.

### **Groups and Individual Freedom:**

To begin with a proposition that group life is inimical to individual freedom would be to make a fallacy of reasoning's. A group is a collection of individuals who are related to each other by some form of organization and, as such, the relationship-organization basis links the individual with the group.

There can be no conflict between the individual and the group as such, and one may understand these terms only in the context of each other. Groups manifest the individual's desire to live together. In ancient times, groups were few and those involuntary groups that were created by sex, age and birth differences were almost spontaneous growths.



Man had to be of a particular sex, a particular age and of a particular clan or tribe or family. To this extent, the question of individual freedom did not arise at all at least as regards membership of the group.

But in modern times, voluntary groups are many and one may have to decide whether or not he would associate himself with a sect of religion, a social institution or a particular economic activity. Although membership of any of these groups is voluntary, at the same time it has to be observed that man in fact decides in favor of joining a group or the other; it helps him to further his interests of self preservation and self-expression and in very few cases would he like to live like a recluse in the sanctuary of his own impractical thoughts.

Membership of a group now-a-days expresses a voluntary characteristic about it in many cases, but individual action vis-a-vis the group is not always very clearly independent. Individual freedom is curbed by social codes that are expressed by the groups in many ways. Even though within the wide range of activities allowed to the individual he is able to make his own choice and to limit the range of his activities, such limited range of activities too will be under the surveillance of society in several ways.

On the one hand, the individual's desires may come into direct conflict with the group norms; and, on the other, he may face a confusing situation in which the demands of different groups to which he belongs conflict with each other. For example, if he has a conscience against exploitation of the minority population, and the official set-up in his country decrees such exploitation, he will naturally resist the attempts of the establishment.

In the second case, he may remain wedded to the ideals of his orthodox family background when at the same time he has educated himself along the lines of liberal and secular knowledge. If, now, he wishes to marry into another caste when his family prohibits exogamy, he will face a dilemma which will blunt action.

Similar conditions confront an individual when he has to decide upon the manner in which he has to cast his vote, he has to choose an occupation or a home, or participate in an unethical business practice.

Today, the state regulates principles relating to holding of property, accumulation of property and inheritance. All other activities in a modern society are somehow linked with economic activities and, of course, with sex. Pressures are exerted upon the individual so that he conforms to the needs and prescriptions of the society or of the groups to which he belongs.

**These pressures may manifest themselves in any of the following ways:**

(1) Dominant groups exist in modern society which exerts their 'pressures' upon all other groups in such a way that the wishes of the former prevail in determining the comprehensive picture of the society as a whole. For example, business classes in capitalistic and semi-capitalistic societies tend to become so prominent that they control not only the production and the distribution systems in the society but also the form of administration required for its governance.

(2) In every group there is a 'center of authority' located within the group itself that will manifest itself in dictates that are imposed upon the submissive elements in the group. Such authority may seek its own prestige and to assert its pride of position without really caring for common ends. In a family, for instance, junior individuals may be dominated over by elders, and this tendency on the part of the latter may easily incite the former to revolt. A glimpse of this conflict one may have in the double tragedy of Romeo and Juliet as depicted by William Shakespeare.

The result may be that the individual, the minor elements or the submissive group will become bitter against the group itself or against society as a whole. One does not, of course, suggest that all authority is bad or harmful for the individual. As in all cases, if authority is blended with tact and wisdom, its effects upon the individual as well as the group will be beneficent.

(3) 'Established institutions' that apply to the group must necessarily circumscribe the individual's behavior with their sanctions and systems of reprisals for violation of their conversions. The institution may be a family heritage, a superstition or a religious dogma. They tend to become sacrosanct though not always with reasons, and their standards may constantly be in the state of modification through the ages: all that individuals in the group are required to do is to blindly conform to their standards.

How often has fetish been the cause of ruin of so much of original thinking of an individual, which could have served mankind better but for the hindrances placed by these institutions. McIver says that the very fact that certain thinkers dream of Utopian conditions establishes that these Original thinkers feel persecuted by social institutions.

(4) Even in respect of mere 'moral freedom', an individual faces situations in society that in effect limit his choice. There may be questions of private and public morality, but whatever it is, indoctrination by society acts as a definite check upon an individual's range of action. Such indoctrination also forms public opinion in the group, for the number of persons conforming to the group norms shall always be higher than those who do not.

Hence, these persons who form the majority will always tend to uphold their accepted values and to frown upon any person who seeks to trample upon them. The pressure of public opinion will also be tremendous and the fear of it may mold spirits that are too adventurous to be beneficial to society. Let it be imagined that these social bonds only curb spirits and personalities, it must be hastily added that for a very large majority in the group these social norms and codes are to their advantage.

These people cannot in good many matters think or decide for themselves and group thoughts and decisions save them from the immense trouble of having to deliberate and find out the course of action. Perhaps only the very original individual feels these group restraints and tries to resist them; yet even in his case it may be maintained that the independence of thought that he enjoys is also a distinct contribution of the culture values of his own group.

### **The Family as a Group:**

According to McIver, the family is a group defined by a sex relationship that is sufficiently precise and relatively stable, and its function is procreation and upbringing of children. From the very definition itself, we find that sex alone does not determine the basis of a family; procreation is a very important factor in its organization.

Those who talk of ‘companionate marriages’ today emphasize that side of family life which provides for the security of companionship to certain persons, but, organizationally, the importance of that type of a family will be relatively low.

**McIver and Page assert that a family distinctly stands for the following:**

- (i) The mating relationship between two (or more) persons;
- (ii) The sharing of the obligations of the upbringing of the child, and this refers to the economic side of the functions of a family;
- (iii) Common habitation, and also
- (iv) The institutional arrangements, for a family cannot exist by itself and it needs the recognition of social institutions; and
- (v) A clear social system of nomenclature and reckoning descent.

The family stands out as the basic primary group in any society, and every individual in the course of his life learns to journey into a wider society from the smaller world of his own family.

In early life, not only the creature needs of the individual but his economic, educational, cultural and emotional needs too are answered by the family surroundings. In fact, we shall remember that the very process of socialization of an individual begins in the family.

**Reference**

<http://www.sociologydiscussion.com/social-groups/social-groups-features-types-of-group-and-their-goals/2449>