

SOCI 101

Principles of Social Organizations

Session 9 – SOCIAL GROUPS AND FORMAL
ORGANISATIONS

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Session Overview

– Overview

- All human beings belong to one group or the other and participate in different organisations at different levels of society. This session deals with social groups and organizations and systems for classifying them. We look at different groups and organizations and their dynamism. The session also introduces you to viewing organisation as systems and also the idea that there are or have been different types of societies in human history.

– Goals and Objectives

- define a group
- distinguish between the different types of groups
- explain concepts such as social categories, social aggregates, social groups, communities and organizations
- explain group dynamics and the effects of group on the individual

Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Topic One : Define Group
- Topic Two: Types of Groups, Group Dynamics and the effect of Groups on the Individuals
- Topic Three: Explain the following Concepts : Social Categories and Social Aggregates

Reading List

- Ballantine, J. and K. A. Roberts (2007) *Our Social World: Introduction to Sociology*, Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.
- Berger P. L. (1963) *Invitation to Sociology*, New York: Anchor Books.
- Dzorgbo D-B. S. (2013) *Sociological Theory: Classical Ideas and their Application in the African Context*, Accra: Woeli Publishing Services
- Giddens, A. (2004) *Sociology: Introductory Readings*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Haralambos M. (1995) *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, London: Collins Educational.
- Robertson, Ian (1987) *Sociology: The Basic Concepts*, New York: Worth Publishers.
- Schaefer R. (2004) *Sociology*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Turner, J. H. (2006) *Sociology* New Jersey: Pearson

- Robertson, Ian (1987) *Sociology: The Basic Concepts*, New York: Worth Publishers.

Topic One: Definition of Group

- The term **group** is an amorphous one and can refer to a wide variety of gatherings, from just two people (think about a “group project” with a friend), a club, a regular gathering of friends, or people who work together or share a hobby
- Social groups as made up of, two or more people who identify and interact with one another on a regular basis. Members of social groups often share common experiences, loyalties, and interests. Social

Topic Two:

Types of Groups

- **Primary Groups** are groups whose members associate with each other directly and regularly on face-to-face basis and thus create relatively small and more intimate and emotionally long lasting relationship. They powerful influence on an individual's personality or self-identity and also serving expressive needs.
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- **Secondary Group** are as larger, less personal and less emotional in orientation. Members have very little sentiments attached to their relationships rather their relationships serve instrumental needs. But secondary groups may also occasionally take on the characteristics of primary groups.
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- **In-groups are groups that** define boundaries between themselves and everyone else. In-groups share common interests and expectations, and render members' behaviours more predictable. In-groups use names, slogans, dress or badges to identify themselves and they tend to view themselves in positive light and see others in a negative light.
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- **Out-groups** are those social groupings in which the individual does not feel a sense of belonging. Members of particular in-groups normally see other in-groups as out-groups.
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- **Reference groups** are when members of other groups or individuals evaluate their behaviours in relation to viewpoint and standards of another groups. These other groups are reference groups.
- Virtual group has emerged as a result of the use of the internet.
- **Group Closure** as the process whereby groups maintain boundaries separating themselves from others with the use of exclusive devices.

Group Dynamics and Systems (cont'd)

Group are always dynamics and are like social systems with the essential features, forces and processes that interact to give them determinate shapes and keep them functioning as social systems not only to maintain themselves but to also achieve their goals. These features are:

- Leadership
- Group conformity
- Decision making in group
- Groupthink

Topic Two:

Group Dynamics and Systems (cont'd)

- Group dynamics are the essential features, forces and processes that interact to give social groups determinate shapes and keep them functioning as social systems not only to maintain themselves but to also achieve their goals.
- Leadership is process of inspiring, motivating and empowering others to voluntarily commit themselves to achieving the leader's vision and the group's goals. Leadership differs from group to group, person to person and place to place. Some leaders are task leaders in that their main focus is to direct and coordinate others in the group and their activities to achieve the groups' goals. Some leaders known as expressive leaders, however, pay attention to social and emotional concerns of group members in the achievement of group goals. However, all groups need both instrumental and expressive leadership or task and socio-emotional tactics to function more effectively.

Group Dynamics and Systems (cont'd)

- Group conformity occurs when group members feel that their leaders normally act in the group's interest. This usually happens when group members consider that the power their leader exercises over them is legitimate or what is normally referred to as authority.
- Decision making in group refers to abilities and processes of determining particular line of action to pursue for the purpose of achieving specific defined goals.
- groupthink as occurring when members of cohesive groups often withhold criticisms of one another and become less critical of each other, thus leading the group to act more decisively, but they lose sight with reality and become too bold or grandiose so that their decisions often lead to disaster.

Topic Two

Effects of Groups on Individuals (cont'd)

A group may have effects on Individuals through the following:

- Its Size and Structure of Groups: Dyads and Triads
- Its Cohesiveness and Solidarity,
- Clique and Subgroup Formation
- Free Riding and Social Loafing attitudes

Topic Two

Effects of Groups on Individuals (cont'd)

- A dyad is a group of two persons
- A triad is a group of three persons.
- Group's cohesiveness and solidarity depend on the frequency of face-to-face interaction among members and also the feelings of threat from outside. Normally, people band together more in the face of external threat. But factors such as commonality of background of members also enhance cohesiveness and solidarity.
- Large groups often create less personal interactions among members thus individuals are likely to create different coalitions or subgroups or cliques. Such coalitions can even lead to a break up of the group.
- The larger the group, the more likely some members become free-riders, the tendency for some members to avoid doing their share in achieving group goals, and yet enjoy the benefits that accrue from group efforts and decisions.
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Topic Three:

Social Aggregates and categories

Social categorization is an important basis for social differentiation and social stratification in society

- **Social aggregates** as a collection of people who come together as a result of events, activities and issues. While social categories are likely to be enduring, social aggregates are generally transitory in nature. For example, people travelling in a bus to Cape Coast or watching a football match on a large TV screen in a pub.
- **Social categories** are any number of persons who possess some social characteristics or set of characteristics in common. Examples are sex, age, income, ethnic group, education levels, employment status, marital status, etc. Thus all distance education students, all nurses Christians, Moslems, pensioners, and farmers in Ghana constitute social categories. Social categories and category-system are important bases for human interaction. Human interaction is not simply just a random affair but mediated by many factors such as age, sex, ethnic association, employment status, etc.
- categories and social aggregates may become social groups if and when their members engage in social interactions that are enduring, share goals and norms and have subjective awareness as “we”.

Conclusions

In this session we have learnt to:

- define a group
- distinguish between the different types of groups
- explain concepts such as social categories, social aggregates, social groups, communities and organizations
- explain group dynamics and the effects of group on the individual