

These the more
intimate kinds of
social



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These are the people with whom we enjoy the more intimate kinds of social relations. The primary groups can be referred to as the ' We' groups. Cooley explained that a primary group involves the sort of sympathy and mutual identification for which ' We' is the natural expression.

Cooley writes-“ By primary groups I means those characterised by intimate face-to-face association and co-operation. They are primary in several senses, but chiefly in that they are fundamental in forming the social nature and ideals of the individual” Primary groups are universal groups functioning in all states of cultural development. They are the chief basis of what is universal in human nature and human ideals. The ' self' is developed and moulded by the primary group relations.

Primary groups socialise the individuals. As Maclver says they are ' the breeding ground of our mores and the nurse of our loyalties.' In primitive culture, and even in advance cultures before the growth of cities, the majority of associations occur in primary groups. Example for primary groups: family, neighbourhood, children's play ground, local brotherhood, friends' club, peer group etc. Chief Characteristics of Primary Groups: The characteristic features described below throw more light on the nature and character of primary groups. 1. Dominance of Face-to-Face Relations: Primary groups are characterised by close and intimate relationships. There exists a fact-to-face relationship among the members.

In primary groups everyone knows everyone else; one's name and fame, one's status, wealth, occupation, level of education etc. Close contact between them increases intimacy among the members. Face-to-face

relations are commonly observed in small groups like family, children's playgroup, and neighbourhood and so on. The Character of Primary Relations: (a) Identity of Ends: Members of the primary groups have more or less identical desires and attitudes. They work together for the attainment of their common ends without disagreement. They look at the world through the same eyes.

Every member of the group pursues, as one of his ends, the welfare of the other. The identification of ends is connected with the fusion of personalities within the group. (b) The Relationship is an End in Itself: The primary relationship is regarded as an end in itself, but not a means to an end.

It is neither utilitarian nor motivated by any economic gain. It is intrinsically enjoyable. True love between husband and wife or genuine friendship between two individuals is for example, beyond the consideration of any selfish motive. (c) The Relationship is Personal: In the primary group the interest of each is centered in others as persons. The relationship disappears if the particular person disappears from it. As Kingsley Davis says, 'the primary relationship is a matter of persons; it exists because of the person, not despite him'. The relationship is non-transferable and irreplaceable. For example the relationship between the husband and wife is such that no third person can replace any one of the two.

(d) The Relationship is Inclusive: The individual in a personal relationship is not an abstraction. Individuals are treated as complete human beings. All persons of the group are fused together completely.

Individuals know each other very well. Different sides of member's personality are known to all the other members. (e) The Relationship is Spontaneous: A purely primary relationship is voluntary. It is not planned. It is not based on any contract.

Relationships develop between members naturally and spontaneously. The relationships that develop between the mother and the child, friend and a friend, husband and wife, child and a child are, for example, purely voluntary, and spontaneous. 2. Small size: Primary Groups are smaller in size. Effective participation of the members is possible only when the group is of a small size.

Other factors being equal, the smaller the group the more intimate it is. The character of the group tends to change with its size. The increase in the size of the group will have a negative effect on the intimacy of the members. 3. Physical Proximity or Nearness: Face-to-face relations can be found only when members reside in a particular area more or less permanently. Seeing and talking, with each other facilitates the exchange of ideas, opinions and sentiments. It makes possible the 'conversation of gestures' of which Mead speaks. Caressing, kissing, eating and dwelling together, playing, travelling studying together- all tend to be regarded as external symbols of close solidarity.

Physical proximity' provides an opportunity for the very development of primary groups. 4. Stability of the Group: A primary group is relatively a permanent group. Other things being equal, the longer the group remains together, the more numerous and deeper are the contacts between its

members. Social ties deepen in time. Although a husband and wife may have quarreled for ten years, the very fact that they have lived together for that long, makes it hard for them to do without each other.

5. Similarity of Background: The members of a primary group must have more or less the same background. There must be some approximations in their levels of experience. Each must have something to contribute, to give as well as to take.

The person “ who is too far above or below it, disturbs the process of group participation”. This is essential even for the easy interplay of personalities in the family, the play group, the gang etc. 6. Limited Self-Interest: Members of the primary group subordinate their personal interests to the interests of the group. The common interest of the group is strong enough to control individual interest. The commonness of interests provides mental pleasure and contentment to the members. 7. Intensity of Shared Interest: The shared interests of the group also hold them together.

The interest which is shared acquires a new significance, a new emphasis, a new valuation. It has a breadth of support. The group is relatively durable because of these shared interests. The primary group sustains the interest of living itself. 8.

Communication: Communication in the case of primary group like family or children’s play group, for example, is very quick and effective. Direct or face-to-face contact helps easy communication between the members. 9.

Unspecialised Character of the Primary Group: A primary group is not

deliberately created nor is it specialised in character. It has not come into being for the pursuit of any particular interest of the people.

On the other hand, the interests of primary groups are always comprehensive. Hence, the group is unspecialised in character. 10.

Direct Cooperation: Direct cooperation characterises primary group.

Members work directly and in cooperation with each other to achieve their common interests. They do not act independently nor even interdependently, but all participate in the same process. Division of labour as it is understood in a complex industrial society does not exist in a primary group. Work is essentially ' a mode of sharing a common experience'. The group is ' a unity in the performance of its function'.