

**The Lecture Contains:**

- ☰ Group Dynamics
- ☰ What is a group?
- ☰ The degree of 'groupness'
- ☰ Group formation: motivation for joining groups
- ☰ How does a group function?
- ☰ Cohesiveness: (de)personalized attraction

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## Group Dynamics

- This lecture deals with the basics of group dynamics and will cover the following themes :
  - The nature and definition of a group
  - The degree of 'groupness'
  - Group formation: motivation for joining groups
  - How does a group function?

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### What is a group?

- A group is comprised of two or more interacting persons with the following characteristics :
  - *Group members share common goals* : The shared goals, for example, for the students in a class could be to learn the subject.
  - *Their interactions are structured* : There is a consensus about the roles of group member for the group activities.
  - *They have a stable relationship* : Stability refers to a considerable time period for which the group remains existent.
  - *They are interdependent* : For the shared goal to be achieved, the members co-ordinate their activities in a manner that their cumulative efforts help the group reach its goals.
  - *They perceive that they are a part of the group* : There is a sense of identification with the group. We will now elaborate on this point by taking up the concept of 'degree of groupness'.

### The degree of 'groupness'

- Social psychologists are of the opinion that the most crucial element of the definition of a group (or saying whether a person belongs to a group or not) is the extent to which the members perceive themselves being a part of the group. The perception is known as degree of groupness. There can be groups working for years or decades (e.g., political groups or sports teams) and their degree of groupness may be very high but there can be groups (such as passengers travelling on an aircraft) where the degree of groupness may be minimal. However, the prerequisite for calling a collection of people to be a group, it is necessary that some degree of groupness is felt by its members.

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### Group formation: motivation for joining groups

- There are multiple reasons for people being motivated to join a group :
  - *Satisfying social or psychological needs* : These needs could be gaining and providing attention and affection besides having a sense of belongingness.
  - *Achieving tasks that are essentially 'social'* : A young person may join a political party hoping that this would be the medium through which he/she may bring about a social change.
  - *Gaining knowledge or information* : Joining a group also becomes empowering in terms of receiving information or knowledge that may be difficult to get otherwise. Only after joining a political party, a youngster may learn the ways to influence a set of people .
  - *Security needs* : Many a time, joining a group provides security to a person. Particularly, when one goes to a new place of stay or belongs to a marginalized sections of the society, forming or joining a group may provide a sense of security.
  - *Positive social identity* : One very important reason for which a person joins a group is to attain a positive social identity that enhances one's self-esteem.

### How does a group function?

- A group influences its members towards various group activities through four of its aspects :
  - *Roles and role conflicts* : Depending upon different kinds of activities in a group, there are different kinds of roles that may either be assigned to or internalized by its members. Furthermore, there are possibilities of role conflicts when it becomes distressing for a person to carry out multiple roles due to their demand on time and energy. For example, parents of a newborn child in nuclear families may lead to role conflicts as it may be distressing for the working parents to do justice to the roles of a parent and professional .
  - *Status and hierarchy* : Status and hierarchy within the group may be motivating factor for the members in terms of moving up in the hierarchy.
  - *Norms* : Direct or indirect group and prescriptive or proscriptive group norms are ways in which members are influenced in the group setting.
  - *Cohesiveness* : In the group setting, cohesiveness is understood as (de)personalized attraction or an attraction towards the group members not due to their individual characteristics but by virtue of the fact that the members represent the group's key characteristics or stance. Let us now examine the factors affecting cohesiveness.

### **Cohesiveness: (de)personalized attraction**

- As observed above, cohesiveness is (de)personalized attraction towards the group members as the representatives of the group's core values. Following are the factors that influence cohesiveness :
  - *Task-social and individual-group dimensions* : According to Cota et. al (1995), cohesiveness comprises of these two dimensions. Task-social dimension refers to whether the members are interested in the group goals or the social relationship in it. The individual-group dimension refers to whether the members are dedicated to the group or the members. Both these dimensions contribute to the (de)personalized attraction that signifies cohesiveness.
  - *Gaining entry into the group* : The more difficult the entry into a group, the more the attraction of the members towards it.
  - *External threats or severe competition* : In the face of extreme situations such as external threat or severe competition, the attraction towards the group increases as the sense of security and self-esteem as associated with group membership.
  - *Group size* : The smaller the group, the higher the cohesiveness in the group.