

Introduction to Sociology

Lecture 12 - Groups, Group Dynamics, Formal Organizations and Organizational Culture

Phua Kai Lit, PhD (Johns Hopkins)

ADTP

Sunway University



Learning Objectives

- Primary group and secondary group
- Reference group
- In-group versus Out-group
- Group characteristics and dynamics (Simmel)
- Conformity
- Formal organizations
- Organizational Culture
- Iron Law of Oligarchy (Michels)



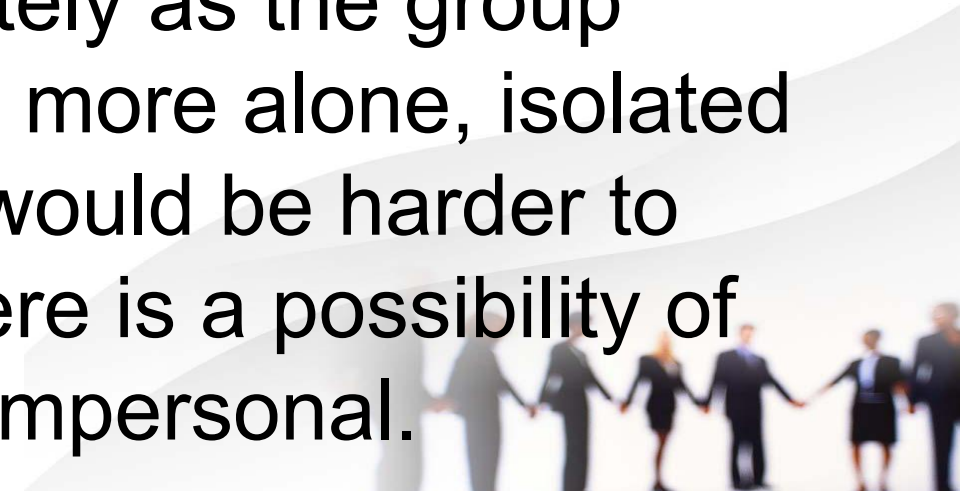
Groups

- Primary group: groups basic to social life (e.g. family) - significant others (expressive function)
- Secondary group: groups in school or at work (instrumental function) - task-focused and time-limited
- Expressive function - meets emotional needs of members
- Instrumental function - carry out tasks to achieve goals
- Reference group: A group that serves as a yardstick or basis of comparison/emulation for another group
- In-group versus Out-group



Group dynamics

- Georg Simmel on dyads and triads
- In a dyad a person is able to retain their individuality. In the triad there is a possibility of a dyad forming within the triad thereby threatening the remaining individual's independence and causing them to become the subordinate of the group. Unfortunately as the group becomes larger, the individual grows more alone, isolated and segmented. In a larger group it would be harder to exert control on an individual, but there is a possibility of the individual becoming distant and impersonal.



Group Characteristics and Dynamics

- Social characteristics of participants and how these affect group dynamics - gender, age, educational level, personality
- Peer group - group consisting of people of similar age, social status, and interests. Example - teenage peer group.
- Conformity: complying with group or social norms
- Sanctions



Formal Organizations

- Formal organizations: large, impersonal entities set up to achieve explicit goals
- Impersonal means: removal of personal feelings from professional situations
- Voluntary organizations
- Coercive organizations - ones you don't join voluntarily
e.g. prisons, mental hospitals



How do we know how an organization is structured?

- Organization chart
- Examples of organization charts
- Formal organizations include officially-recognized student societies and clubs at Sunway University.
- What are the requirements?



Organizational culture

- Organizational chart versus actual power structure of the organization
- Informal culture of the organization
- How does the informal culture affect the achievement of organization's goals? Making new products, increasing sales, making an impact on society, getting laws passed, preventing laws from being passed (e.g. NRA in USA)
- Example - Japanese corporate culture and the “sarariman”
- Theory X (scientific management), Theory Y, Theory Z



Iron Law of Oligarchy

- Robert Michels
- Argued that all organizations will eventually be dominated by a small elite



Thank you

