

Paper – Principle of Sociology, B.A. Honours

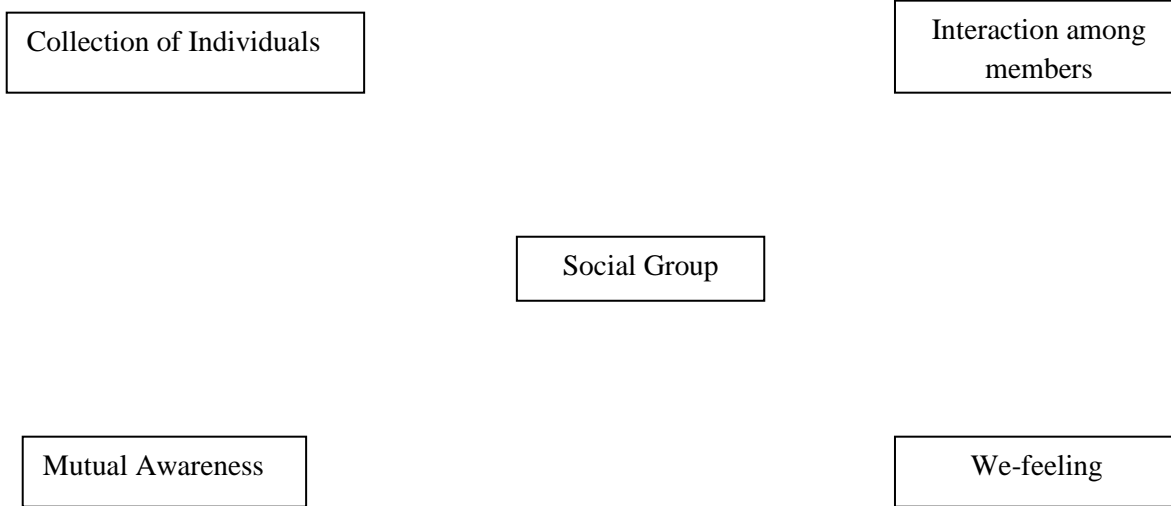
Topic: Meaning, Definition, characteristics and classification

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Society consists of groups. Society starts with an aggregate of people. But the mere congregation of people in a physical area does not more than a social group. A social group exists when two or more people are in direct or indirect contact and communication. The members of the group stimulate and respond to one another in some meaningful way. This mutual stimulation and response of individuals and groups is social interaction. Society is rooted in social interaction. It represents the conditioned behaviour of persons and groups.



Definition:

According to H.M. Johnson “A social group is a system of social interaction”.

According to Olburn and Nimkoff “Whenever two or more individuals come together and influence one another, they may be said to constitute a social group”.

R.M. Maciver and page define social group as ‘any collection of human beings who are brought into human relationships with one another’.

Characteristics of group:

1. Collection of individuals
2. Interaction among members
3. Mutual awareness
4. We – feeling
5. Group unity and solidarity
6. Common Interests
7. Similar behaviour
8. Group norms
9. Size of the group
10. Stability
11. Groups are Dynamic

Classifications of Social Groups

1. 'In – groups' and 'Out – groups' – W.G. Sumner in his 'folkways' differentiates between ' in-groups' and 'out – groups'. An 'In-group' is simply the we – group, an 'out – group' the 'They – group'.
2. Horizontal Groups and Vertical Groups - P.A. Sorokin has divided groups into two major types – the horizontal and the vertical. The former are large, inclusive groups. Such as nations, Religious organisations and political parties. The latter are smaller divisions, such as economic classes which give the individual his status in society.
3. Territorial groups and non-territorial groups – Park and Burgess have distinguished between territorial groups (Ex-communities and states) and non-territorial groups (Ex-classes, Castes, Crowds and Public).
4. Primary and Secondary Groups – on the basis of nature and quality of social interaction groups have been classified into primary and secondary. The name of C.H. Cooley is very much associated with this classification though in actuality, he has not made any such classification. Cooley introduced the term 'primary group' and spoke nothing about 'secondary group'.