Unit 1: Self and Society – Key Understandings

Definitions

Self: Our personal identity is defined by our membership in different groups in society (in essence, our personal identity is an aggregate of our social/group identities, such as Rafflesian, cricketer, robotics head)

Group function: A group establishes its identity by marking its boundaries, appointing leaders who then make decisions for the group, cultivate a sense of belonging, set goals and directions to steer the members of the group towards certain objectives.

Society: Society is made up of groups. Different groups in society (primary, secondary or reference) exist to meet different needs of the individuals.

- Primary: Groups that are closely knit (close interaction) and usually a smaller group. Characterized by common values shared, strong inter-personal bonds between the members of the group.
- Secondary: Something that is more distant from you.
- Reference: A group that shapes your values (religion, cultural group)

Socialization: Groups seek to regulate and control its members' behaviour through the process of socialization (through family, school, peers, and media) – where members learn to conform to the norms, values and ways of the group (thus forming a strong culture) as part of their personal identity. (Basically the process in which the groups form one's personal identity)

Comparison: A group identity is strengthened when the members contrast their group with other groups – and in the process distinguish themselves from other group, thus forming a salient group identity.

Nature of Groups

Definition: A social group consists of a number of individuals who have a common identity, some feeling of unity, and certain common goals and shared norms. In any social group, the individuals interact with one another according to established statuses and roles.

- Members develop expectations of "proper behaviours" for people of certain positions in the group.
- Members develop a sense of identity to their group, and feel that they are different to non-members.
- Social groups have a set of values and norms that might differ from those of a larger society
- New members may face sanctions (such as disapproval from current members) when they do not comply with these norms.

Social Groups VS Social Aggregate

Social aggregate refers to people who are temporarily in physical proximity to one another (such as passengers in the train), but do not interact with one another or consider their temporary association to have any meaning.

Note: Social aggregates do not count as social groups. However, these social aggregates may lead to social groups – for example, if the people in the bus-ride start playing card games and having fun with one another.

Criteria for Social Group

- The members of the group have certain expectations for people who take up important roles within the group.
- Members of a social group carry the fact of their membership with them and see the group as a distinct entity with specific requirements for membership.
- A social group has a purpose which is shared (requires the co-operation of the members to achieve)
- A social group (unlike a social aggregate) does not cease to exist when its members are away from one another.

1. Permanence beyond the meetings of the members (exists even when the members are dispersed).
2. Means for identifying members through specific characteristics that may be unique to the group.
3. Mechanisms for recruiting new members
4. Goals/purposes that the group wishes to achieve by means of cooperation between members
5. Set norms for behaviour and actions
6. Means for controlling the behaviour of members

Primary and Secondary Groups

Note: The key difference lies in the kinds of relationships that the members have with one another.

Primary groups:

- Characterized by intimate face-to-face association and cooperation.
- Fundamental for forming the social nature and ideas of the individual

This forms in the fusion of one's individualities in a common whole, so that many of one's purposes lie in the purposes of the group itself (and by extension, achieving those purposes).

"The nursery of human nature" – Charles Horton Cooley, because primary groups have the earliest and most fundamental effect on the individuals' socialization and development. The three main primary social groups (as identified by Cooley) are: the family, the child's play groups, and neighbourhood or community groups.

Secondary Groups:

- Characterized by less intimacy amongst its members.
- Secondary groups have specific goals, are very formally organized, and is impersonal
- Members usually do not interact with all other members of the group.
- These are usually larger than primary groups.

For example, members of a family (primary group) are emotionally involved with one another and know one another well. They ineract with one another in terms of their total personalities, and not just in terms of their social roles/potential contributions (athlete or community leader)

Function of Groups

To function properly, all groups must:

1. Define their boundaries
2. Choose their leaders to make their appropriate decision
3.
4. s
5. Set specific goals which are achieved by assigning tasks to members
6. Control the behaviour of their members

Defining Boundaries

Group members must be able to identify members and non-members.

- Symbols (uniforms, badges, pins)
- Language (specific to dialects/ethnic groups)
- Gestures, such as special handshakes
- Skin colour

Choosing Leaders

A leader is defined as one who occupies a central role or position of dominance and influence in a group.

Leadership can be assigned according to:

- Meritocracy (most capable/dominant) – in formal situations (companies)
- Personality – in informal social groups
- Skills
- Democratic process of nominations/voting

Types of leadership:

1. Instrumental leadership
   a. Leader actively proposes tasks and plans to guide the group toward achieving goals
2. Expressive leadership
   a. Leader works to keep relations among groups members harmonious and morale high.
- Note: Both kinds of leadership are essential to the success of the group.

These leaders are to make the appropriate decisions, to maintain the success of the group as well as to maintain their central position with relevance to the group.

Setting Goals

These goals are set to achieve the purpose of the group, and these goals