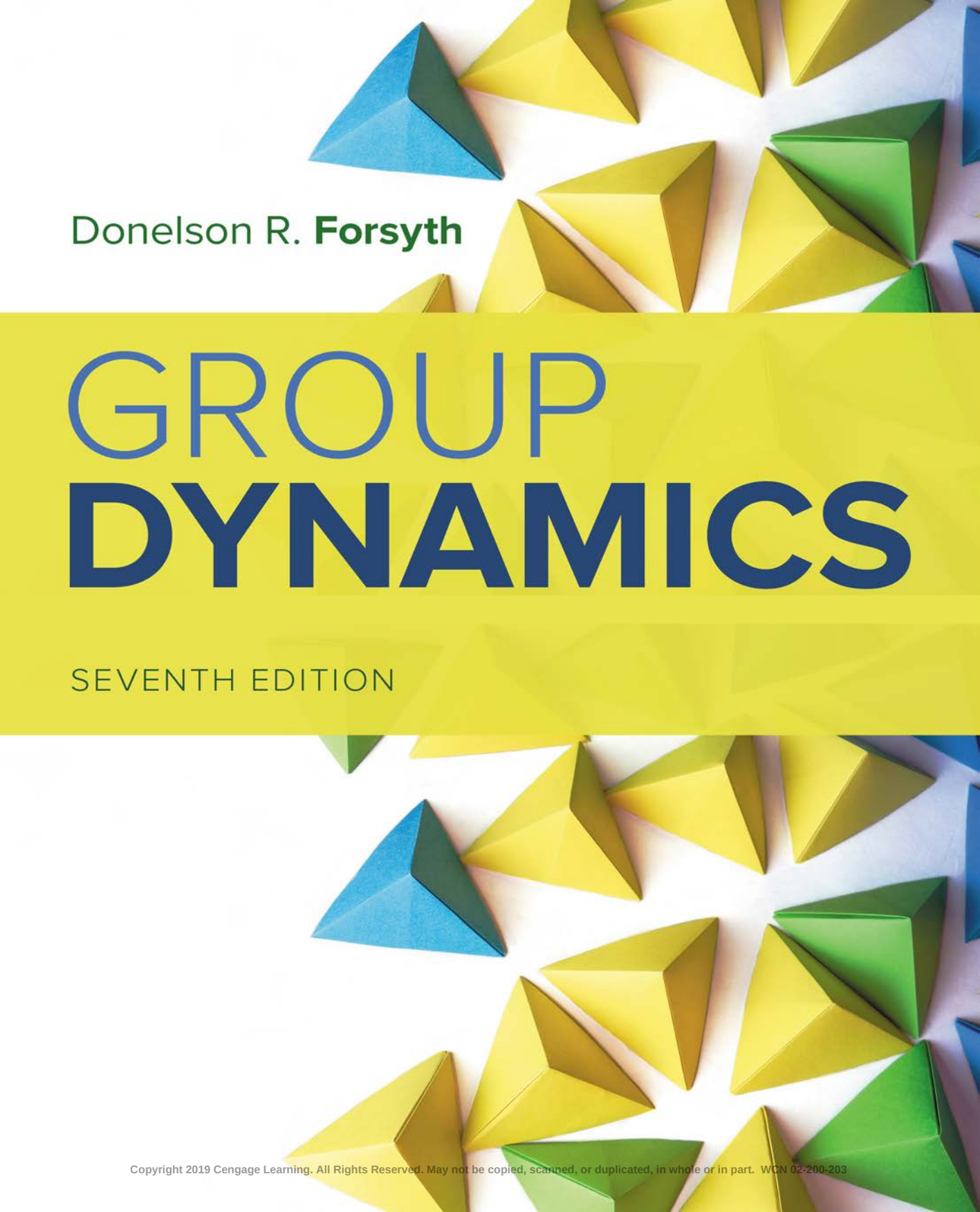

Donelson R. **Forsyth**

GROUP DYNAMICS

SEVENTH EDITION

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GROUP DYNAMICS

SEVENTH EDITION

Donelson R.
FORSYTH
University of Richmond

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Australia • Brazil • Mexico • Singapore • United Kingdom • United States

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to Claire Llewellyn

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Preface

Welcome to the study of groups and their dynamics. The theories, research findings, definitions, case studies, examples, tables, and figures that fill this book's pages have just one purpose: to describe and explain all things related to people and their groups. Why do we join groups? What holds a group together? Do our groups change over time? How do groups influence us and how do we influence them? When does a group become a team? Why do some groups get so little done? What causes conflict in and between groups? What are groups, and what are their essential qualities? These are just a few of the questions asked, explored, and answered in *Group Dynamics*.

Understanding people—why they think, feel, and act the way they do—requires understanding their groups. Human behavior is so often group behavior that people must be studied in context—embedded in their families, friendship cliques, teams, organizations, and so on—rather than in isolation. Understanding the social world—its politics, institutions, cultures, and conflicts—also requires understanding the intersecting and continually interacting groups that form society. Understanding yourself—why *you* think, feel, and act the way you do in any given situation—also requires understanding groups. In groups you define and confirm your values and beliefs and take on or refine your identity. When you face uncertain situations, you gain reassuring information about your problems and security in companionship in groups. You are most who you are when you are with others in groups.

Understanding groups is also eminently practical. Much of the world's work is done by groups and teams, so efficiency, achievement, and progress—success itself—depend on understanding the strengths and weaknesses of groups. Productivity in the workplace, problem-solving in the boardroom, learning in the classroom, and even therapeutic change—all depend on group-level processes. Groups, too, hold the key to solving such societal problems as racism, sexism, and international conflict. Any attempt to change society will succeed only if the groups within that society change.

FEATURES

This book is about groups, but it is not based on experts' opinions or common-sense assumptions. It offers, instead, a scientific analysis that draws on theory and research from any and all disciplines that study groups. The book reviews

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hundreds of theories and thousands of empirical studies that test those theories, all in an attempt to better understand what makes groups tick.

- *Organization*: The chapters progress from basic issues and processes to the analysis of more specialized topics. The first two chapters consider questions of definition, history, and methods, and they are followed by chapters dealing with group formation, cohesion, development, and structure. The book then turns to issues of influence and productivity in groups and teams, before examining groups in specific contexts. The order of chapters, however, is somewhat arbitrary, and many may prefer a different sequence.
- *Cases*: Each chapter begins with a description of one specific group and its processes. These cases are not just mentioned at the start of the chapter and then forgotten, but are used throughout the chapter to illustrate theoretical concepts, define terms, and explore empirical implications. All the cases are or were real groups rather than hypothetical ones, and the incidents described are documented events that occurred within the group (although some literary license was taken for the case used to illustrate the dynamics of juries).
- *Citations and names*: This analysis is based on the work of thousands of researchers, scholars, and students who have explored intriguing but unexplained aspects of groups and their dynamics. Their influence is acknowledged by citations that include their names and the date of the publication of the research report or book. In some cases, too, the researcher or theorist is identified in the text itself, and those citations identify his or her discipline, first name, and last name.
- *Terms, outlines, summaries, and readings*: The text is reader-friendly and includes a number of pedagogical features, including a running glossary, chapter outline, detailed chapter summary, and suggested readings. The approximately 500 key concepts, when first introduced, are set in boldface type and defined at the bottom of the page. The first page of each chapter asks several questions examined in that chapter and also outlines the chapter's contents. Each chapter uses three levels of headings, and ends with an outline summary and a list of sources to consult for more information.

CHANGES FROM THE SIXTH EDITION

This book follows in the footsteps of such classic works as Marvin Shaw's *Group Dynamics: The Psychology of Groups* (1978), Paul Hare's *Handbook of Small Group Research* (1976), and Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander's *Group Dynamics* (1968). But when those books were written, nearly all of the research on groups was conducted by psychologists and sociologists who mostly studied ad hoc groups working in laboratory settings. Now, nearly every science has something to say about groups, teams, and their dynamics. And not just anthropology, communication, education, management and organizational behavior, and political

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science, but also legal studies, biology, and even physics offer insights into issues of group formation, process, and function. As the study of groups continues to thrive intellectually and scientifically, new findings are emerging to explain cohesion, conformity, development, identity, networks, justice, leadership, online groups, multicultural groups, negotiation, power, social comparison, hierarchy, and teams. This edition strives to summarize the current state of scientific research in the field.

Changes to this edition include the following:

- *Updating and clarification of the content*: The book remains a research-oriented examination of group-level processes, within the psychological and sociological traditions. Topics such as influence, leadership, and cohesion are examined in detail, but so are emerging areas of interest, such as multilevel analyses, group composition and diversity, multiteam systems, social networks, neural mechanisms, and new interpretations of classic studies (e.g., the Milgram experiments).
- *Depth of coverage and engagement*: To increase readability and engagement, each chapter has been revised to reduce its length, to improve the flow, and to increase clarity. High-interest material is presented in focus boxes, and each chapter includes self-assessment exercises that ask readers to apply chapter concepts to themselves and their groups.
- *Increased focus on interdisciplinary work in the study of groups*: Since many disciplines study groups and their processes, the text continues to expand its coverage to draw on all fields that investigate groups and teams (e.g., team science, behavioral economics, and social network analysis), but grounds newer findings in foundational theories and methods.
- *Both theory and application are amplified*: Research findings are examined in detail, but when possible these findings are organized by more general theoretical principles. Given the use of groups in organizational, political, military, and industrial settings, the text examines such applied topics as team performance, productivity, leadership, and conflict.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Most things in this world are accomplished by groups rather than by single individuals working alone. This book is no exception. Although I am personally responsible for the ideas presented in this book, one group after another helped me along the way. The scientists who study groups deserve much of the credit, for this book summarizes the results of their intellectual work. Within that group, too, a subgroup of experts provided specific comments and suggestions, including Kevin Cruz, University of Richmond; Verlin Hinsz, North Dakota State University; Steve Karau, Southern Illinois University; Norb Kerr, Michigan State University; Glenn Littlepage, Middle Tennessee State University; Cheri Marmarosh, George Washington University; Scott Tindale, Loyola University; Chris von Rueden, University of Richmond; and Gwen Wittenbaum, Michigan State University. My colleagues and students at the University of Richmond also helped me fine tune my analyses of groups. The members of the production teams at Cengage and at Lumina Datamatics also deserve special thanks for their capable efforts. Kendra J. Brown, in particular, provided continual guidance as the manuscript was transformed into a published book.

I have been lucky to have been part of many wonderful groups in my lifetime. But one group—that small coterie of Claire, David, Rachel, and Don—deserves far more than just acknowledgment. So, thanks as always to the best of all groups, my family, for their love and support.

—Donelson R. Forsyth, Midlothian, Virginia

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Introduction to Group Dynamics

CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Groups come in all shapes and sizes and their purposes are many and varied, but their influence is universal. The tendency to join with others in groups is perhaps the single most important characteristic of humans, and the processes that unfold within these groups leave an indelible imprint on their members and on society. Yet, groups remain something of a mystery: unstudied at best, misunderstood at worst. This investigation into the nature of groups begins by answering two fundamental questions: What is a group and what are group dynamics?

- What are groups?
- What are the four basic types of groups?
- What distinguishes one group from another?
- What are group dynamics?
- Why study groups and their dynamics?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

1-1 What Are Groups?

1-1a Defining Groups

1-1b Varieties of Groups

1-1c Characteristics of Groups

1-2 What Are Group Dynamics?

1-2a Dynamic Group Processes

1-2b Process and Progress over Time

1-3 Why Study Groups?

1-3a Understanding People

1-3b Understanding the Social World

1-3c Applications to Practical Problems

1-4 The Value of Groups

Chapter Review

Resources

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The Adventure Expedition: Groups and Their Dynamics

On May 10, 1996, just after midnight, the members of the Adventure Consultants Guided Expedition crawled from tents pitched high on Mt. Everest to begin the final leg of their journey to the top of the world. The group included ten clients who had paid hefty sums to join the expedition; guides who set the climbing lines, carried provisions, and helped climbers along the way; and Rob Hall, the team's leader. Hall was one of the most experienced high-altitude climbers in the world; he had scaled Everest four times before.

The climb to the summit of Mt. Everest is a carefully orchestrated undertaking. Teams begin the ascent in the middle of the night to reach the peak and return in a single day. But if their progress up the mountain is too slow, even a midnight departure is not early enough to get them up to the top and back down safely. So groups typically establish and adhere to the turnaround rule: If you have not reached the summit by 2 PM—at the very latest—your group must turn back.

The Adventure Expedition broke that rule. The most experienced climbers reached the summit by early afternoon, but other group members continued their dogged ascent well after caution demanded they turn around. Many of them suffered from oxygen deprivation, for the atmosphere above 24,000 feet is so thin that most hikers breathe from tanks of compressed air. Even these supplements cannot counteract the exhaustion that comes of climbing treacherous, ice-coated terrain, and many suffered from confused thinking, nausea, and dizziness. Yet, they may still have managed to climb to safety had it not been for the storm—a rogue blizzard with 60-knot winds that cut the climbers off from camp and any hope of rescue. When the storm lifted the next day, four members of the Adventure Expedition were dead. The victims included two clients (Douglas Hansen and Yasuko Nanba), a guide (Andrew Harris), and the group's leader (Rob Hall). Hall guaranteed his clients that they would reach the top of the mountain and return safely; he could not keep that promise (Krakauer, 1997).

Groups are and always will be essential to human life. Across all cultures and eras we have lived, worked, thrived, and died in our families, tribes, communes, communities, and clans. Our ancestors protected themselves from dangers and disasters by joining together in groups. Early civilizations—the Aztecs, Persians, Greeks, and Romans—organized their societies by forming legions, assemblies, publics, legislative bodies, and trade associations. For time immemorial, people have gathered for civic and religious purposes, including worship, celebrations, and festivals.

So why study these groups? The answer is not complicated: Groups hold the secret to the universe—the human universe, at any rate. The rare individual—the prisoner in solitary confinement, the recluse, the castaway—is isolated from all groups, but most of us belong to all manner of groups: from our small, close-knit groups such as families or very close friends to larger groups of associates and colleagues at school or where we work, to the very large groups of people with whom we share an important quality that creates a psychological bond between us all. Given we spend our entire lives getting into, getting out of, and taking part in groups, it's best to not ignore them. Even better, it's best to understand them: to recognize their key features, to study the psychological and interpersonal processes that continually shape and reshape them, and to learn ways to help them function effectively.

1-1 WHAT ARE GROUPS?

Fish swimming in synchronized unison are called a school. A gathering of kangaroos is a mob. A threesome of crows cawing from their perch on a telephone wire is a murder. A gam is a group of whales. A flock of larks in flight is an exaltation (Lipton, 1991). But what is a collection of human beings called? A group.

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What Groups Do You Belong To?

Some may bemoan the growing alienation of individuals from the small social groups that once linked them securely to society-at-large, but the single man or woman who has no connection to other men and women is an extraordinarily rare human being.

Instructions: Most people belong to dozens of groups, but we can become so accustomed to them that their influence on us goes unnoticed. Before reading further, make a list (written or mental) of all the groups to which you belong.

Interpretation: Did you include your family? The people you work or study with? How about your roommates, housemates, or classmates? All of the people you have friended on Facebook? How about people of your sex, race, and citizenship and those who share your political beliefs? Are African American men, Canadians, and Republicans groups? Are you in a romantic relationship? Did you include you and your partner on your list of groups? Some people's lists are longer than others, but a list of 40 or more groups would not be unusual.

1-1a Defining Groups

The Adventure Expedition was, in many respects, a unique collection of people facing an enormous challenge. Rob Hall, its leader, deliberately created the group by recruiting its 26 members: climbers, guides, cooks, medical staff, and so on. Its members were united in their pursuit of a shared goal, as is so often the case with groups, but some of the members put their own personal needs above those of the group. The members not only interacted with each other face-to-face in a physical space, but they also used technology to communicate with one another and with people who were not part of the team. But Adventure Expedition, although unique in many ways, was nonetheless a **group**: *two or more individuals who are connected by and within social relationships*.

Two or More Individuals Groups come in a staggering assortment of shapes and sizes, from dyads (two members) and triads (three members) to huge crowds, mobs, and assemblies (Simmel, 1902). Sociologist John James was so intrigued by the variation in the size of groups that he took to the streets of Eugene and Portland, Oregon, to record the size of the 9,129 groups he encountered there. He defined a group to be two or more people in "face-to-face interaction as evidenced by the criteria of gesticulation, laughter, smiles, talk, play or work" (James, 1951, p. 475). He recorded pedestrians walking down the city streets, people shopping, children on playgrounds, public gatherings at sports events and festivals, patrons during the intermissions at plays and entering movie theaters, and various types of work crews and teams. Most of these groups were small, usually with only two or three members, but groups that had been deliberately created for some specific purpose, such as the leadership team of a company, tended to be larger. His findings, and the results of studies conducted in other settings (e.g., cafeterias, businesses), suggest that groups tend to "gravitate to the smallest size, two" (Hare, 1976, p. 215; Jorgenson & Dukes, 1976; Ruef, Aldrich, & Carter, 2003).

Who Are Connected Definitions of the word *group* are as varied as groups themselves, but a commonality shared by many of these definitions is an emphasis on social relations that link members to one another. Three persons working on math problems in separate rooms can hardly be considered a group; they are not connected to each other in any way. If, however, we create relationships between them—for example, we let them send notes to each other or we pick one person to distribute the problems to the others—then these three individuals can be considered a rudimentary group. Neither would we call people who share some superficial similarity, such as

group Two or more individuals who are connected by and within social relationships.

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eye color, a favorite football team, or birth date, group members for we expect them to be connected to each other in socially meaningful ways. A family is a group because the members are connected, not just by blood but also by social and emotional relationships. Adventure Expedition was a group because the members were linked by the tasks that they completed collectively and by friendships, alliances, responsibilities, and inevitable antagonisms.

By and Within Social Relations The relations that link the members of groups are not of one type. In families, for example, the relationships are based on kinship, but in the workplace, they are based on task-related interdependencies. In some groups, members are friends, but in others, the members are linked by common interests or experiences. Nor are the relationships linking members equally strong or enduring. Some relationships, like the links between members of a family or a clique of close friends, are tenacious, for they have developed over time and are based on a long history of mutual influence and exchange. In others, the ties between members may be so fragile that they are easily severed. Every individual member of the group does not need to be linked to every other person in the group. In the Adventure Expedition group, for example, some people were liked by all

What Is a *Group*?

No one definition can capture the many nuances of the word *group.* Some definers stress the importance of communication or mutual dependence. Still others suggest that a shared purpose or goal is what turns a mere aggregate of individuals into a bona fide group. Even the minimal number of members needed for a true group is debated, with some definitions requiring three members but others only two (Moreland, 2010; Williams, 2010).

- **Categorization**: "Two or more individuals … [who] perceive themselves to be members of the same social category" (Turner, 1982, p. 15).
- **Communication**: "Three or more people … who (a) think of themselves as a group, (b) are interdependent (e.g., with regard to shared goals or behaviors that affect one another), and (c) communicate (interact) with one another (via face-to-face or technological means)" (Frey & Konieczka, 2010, p. 317).
- **Influence**: "Two or more persons who are interacting with one another in such a manner that each person influences and is influenced by each other person" (Shaw, 1981, p. 454).
- **Interdependence**: "A dynamic whole based on interdependence rather than similarity" (Lewin, 1948, p. 184).
- **Interrelations**: "An aggregation of two or more people who are to some degree in dynamic interrelation with one another" (McGrath, 1984, p. 8).
- **Psychological significance:** "A psychological group is any number of people who interact with each other, are psychologically aware of each other, and perceive themselves to be in a group" (Pennington, 2002, p. 3).
- **Relations**: "Individuals who stand in certain relations to each other, for example, as sharing a common purpose or having a common intentionality, or acting together, or at least having a common interest" (Gould, 2004, p. 119).
- **Shared identity**: "Two or more people possessing a common social identification and whose existence as a group is recognized by a third party" (Brown, 2000, p. 19).
- **Shared tasks and goals**: "Three or more people who work together interdependently on an agreed-upon activity or goal" (Keyton, 2002, p. 5).
- **Size**: "Two or more people" (Williams, 2010, p. 269).
- **Social unit:** "Persons who recognize that they constitute a meaningful social unit, interact on that basis, and are committed to that social unity" (Fine, 2012, p. 21; Kerr & Tindale, 2014).
- **Structure**: "A social unit which consists of a number of individuals who stand in (more or less) definite status and role relationships to one another and which possesses a set of values or norms of its own regulating the behavior of individual members, at least in matters of consequence to the group" (Sherif & Sherif, 1956, p. 144).
- **Systems**: "An intact social system, complete with boundaries, interdependence for some shared purpose, and differentiated member roles" (Hackman & Katz, 2010, p. 1210).

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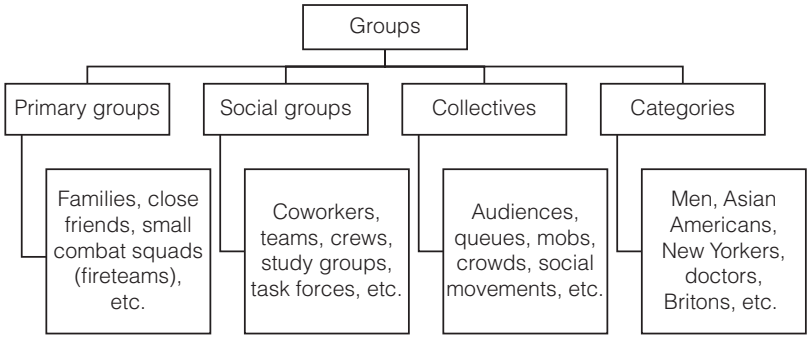

FIGURE 1.1 A fourfold taxonomy of groups and examples of each type.

the other group members, but others had only a few friends in the group. In some cases, such as groups based on ethnicity, race, or gender, the connection linking members may be more psychological than interpersonal. But no matter what the nature of the relations, a group exists when some type of bond links the members to one another and to the group itself (Bosse & Coughlan, 2016).

1-1b Varieties of Groups

No one knows for certain how many groups exist at this moment, but given the number of people on the planet and their groupish proclivities, 30 billion is a conservative estimate. Groups are so numerous that the differences among them are as noteworthy as their similarities. Figure 1.1 brings some order to this challenging miscellany by distinguishing between four types of groups: primary groups, social groups, collectives, and categories.

Primary Groups Sociologist Charles Horton Cooley (1909) labeled the small, intimate clusters of close associates, such as families, good friends, or cliques of peers, **primary groups**. These groups profoundly influence the behavior, feelings, and judgments of their members, for members spend much of their time interacting with one another, usually in face-to-face settings with many of the other members present. Even when the group is dispersed, members nonetheless feel they are still "in" the group, and they consider the group to be a very important part of their lives.

In many cases, individuals become part of primary groups involuntarily: Every member of Adventure Expedition was born into a family that provided for their well-being until they could venture out to join other groups. Other primary groups form when people interact in significant, meaningful ways for a prolonged period of time. For example, and unlike Adventure Expedition, some climbing teams have summited so many mountains on so many expeditions that these groups are more like families than expeditions. They "continue, with more or less the same people in them, for a very long time" (McGrath, 1984, p. 43), and affect the members' lives in significant and enduring ways. They are broad rather than limited in their scope.

Cooley (1909) considered such groups to be primary because they transform individuals into social beings. Primary groups protect members from harm, care for them when they are ill, and provide them with shelter and sustenance, but as Cooley explained, they also create the

primary group A small, long-term group characterized by frequent interaction, solidarity, and high levels of interdependence among members that substantially influences the attitudes, values, and social outcomes of its members.

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connection between the individual and society at large:

> They are primary in several senses, but chiefly in that they are fundamental in forming the social nature and ideals of the individual. The result of intimate association, psychologically, is a certain fusion of individualities in a common whole, so that one's very self, for many purposes at least, is the common life and purpose of the group. Perhaps the simplest way of describing this wholeness is by saying that it is a "we." (Cooley, 1909, p. 23)

Social (Secondary) Groups In earlier eras, people lived most of their lives in primary groups that were clustered together in relatively small tribes or communities. But, as societies became more complex, so did our groups. We began to associate with a wider range of people in less intimate, more public settings, and **social groups** emerged to structure these interactions. Social groups are larger and more formally organized than primary groups, and memberships tend to be shorter in duration and less emotionally involving. Their boundaries are also more permeable, so members can leave old groups behind and join new ones, for they do not demand the level of commitment that primary groups do. People usually belong to a very small number of primary groups, but they can enjoy membership in a variety of social groups. Various terms have been used to describe this category of groups, such as *secondary groups* (Cooley, 1909), *associations* (MacIver & Page, 1937), *task groups* (Lickel, Hamilton, & Sherman, 2001), and *Gesellschaften* (Toennies, 1887/1963).

Social groups, such as the Adventure Expedition, military squads, governing boards, construction workers, teams, crews, fraternities, sororities, dance troupes, orchestras, bands, ensembles, classes, clubs, secretarial pools, congregations, study groups, guilds, task forces, committees, and meetings, are extremely common (Schofer & Longhofer, 2011). When surveyed, 35.7% of Americans reported they belonged to some type of religious group (e.g., a congregation) and 20.0% said they belonged to a sports team or club. The majority, ranging from 50% to 80%, reported doing things in groups, such as attending a sports event together, visiting one another for the evening, sharing a meal together, or going out as a group to see a movie (Putnam, 2000). People could dine, watch movies, and travel singly, but most do not: They prefer to perform these activities in social groups. Americans are above average in their involvement in voluntary associations, but some countries' citizens—the Dutch, Canadians, Scandinavians—are groupier still (Curtis, Baer, & Grabb, 2001).

Collectives Some groups come into existence when people are drawn together by something—an event, an activity, or even danger—but then the group dissolves when the experience ends. Any gathering of individuals can be considered a **collective**, but most theorists reserve the term for larger, less intricately interconnected associations among people (Blumer, 1951). A list of examples of collectives would include crowds watching a building burn, audiences seated in a movie theater, line (*queues*) of people waiting to purchase tickets, gatherings of college students protesting a government policy, and panicked mobs fleeing from danger. But the list would also include social movements of individuals who, though dispersed over a wide area, display common shifts in opinion or actions. The members of collectives are joined by their common interest or shared actions, but they often owe little allegiance to the group. In many cases, such groups are created by happenstance, convenience,

social group A relatively small number of individuals who interact with one another over an extended period of time, such as work groups, clubs, and congregations.

collective A relatively large aggregation or group of individuals who display similarities in actions and outlook. A street crowd, a line of people (a queue), and a panicked group escaping a fire are examples of collectives, as are more widely dispersed groups (e.g., listeners who respond similarly to a public service announcement).

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Are People Bowling Alone?

The numbers tell the tale. In 1975, people reported playing card games together, like poker and bridge, about 14 times a year. By 2000, that number had been halved. In the 1970s, 50% of the people surveyed agreed that their family usually eats dinner together. By the end of the century, only about 33% reported regular family meals and the family vacation was also becoming rarer. Today fewer people report visiting with neighbors frequently and they are less likely to join social clubs, such as the Kiwanis and garden clubs. As the political scientist Robert Putnam (2000) wrote in his book *Bowling Alone*, in the 1960s 8% of all adult American men belonged to a bowling league, as did nearly 5% of all adult women. However, even though the total number of bowlers in America continues to increase over time, fewer and fewer belong to bowling leagues.

Putnam concluded that Americans' withdrawal from groups and associations signals an overall decline in **social capital**. Like financial or economic capital, social capital describes how rich you are, but in interpersonal terms rather than monetary or commercial terms. A person with considerable social capital is well connected to other people across a wide variety of contexts, and these connections provide the means for him or her to accomplish both personal and collective outcomes.

Putnam's findings suggest that the types of groups people join are changing. People are not as interested in joining traditional types of community groups, such as garden clubs, fraternal and professional organizations, or even church-based groups. But some types of groups, such as book groups, support groups, teams at work, and category-based associations (e.g., the American Association of Retired Persons), are increasing in size rather than decreasing. Individuals are also more involved in online associations, interactions, and networks, such as Facebook. These social groups are the ubiquitous "dark matter" of social capital, for they knit people together in social relations but are often overlooked in tallies that track the number and variety of more formal and official groups (Smith, Stebbins, et al., 2016).

or a short-lived experience, and so the relations joining the members are so transitory that they dissolve as soon as the members separate.

Categories A **social category** is a collection of individuals who are similar to one another in some way. For example, citizens of Ireland are Irish, Americans whose ancestors were from Africa are African Americans, and men who are sexually attracted to other men are gay. If a category has no social implications, then it only describes individuals who share a feature in common. If, however, these categories set in motion personal or interpersonal processes—if someone celebrates St. Patrick's Day because of his Irish heritage, if people respond to a woman differently when they see she is an African American, or if a gay man identifies with other LGBTQ persons—then a category may be transformed into a highly influential group (Abrams, 2013).

As social psychologist Henri Tajfel (1974) explained, members of the same social category often share a common identity with one another. They know who is in their category, who is not, and what qualities are typical of insiders and outsiders. This perception of themselves as members of the same group or social category—this **social identity**—is "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together

social capital The degree to which individuals, groups, or larger aggregates of people are linked in social relationships that yield positive, productive benefits; analogous to economic capital (fiscal prosperity), but determined by extensiveness of social connectedness.

social category A perceptual grouping of people who are assumed to be similar to one another in some ways but different in one or more ways, such as all women, the elderly, college students, or all the citizens of a specific country.

social identity An individual's sense of self derived from relationships and memberships in groups; also, those aspects of the self that are assumed to be common to most or all of the members of the same group or social category.

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with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69).

But social categories can also influence the perceptions of people who are not part of the category. When perceivers decide a person they encounter is one of "those people," they will likely rely on any **stereotypes** they have about the members of that social category to formulate an impression of the person. Social categories tend to create divisions between people, and those divisions can result in a sense of *we* and *us* versus *they* and *them*.

1-1c Characteristics of Groups

Each one of the billions of groups that exist at this moment is a unique configuration of individuals, processes, and relationships. The Adventure Expedition mountaineering group, for example, differed in a hundred ways from the other teams of climbers on Mt. Everest that season. But all groups, despite their uniqueness, share some common features. Some of these features, such as the size of the group and the tasks they are attempting, are relatively obvious ones. Other qualities, such as the group's cohesiveness or the permeability of the group's boundaries, must be uncovered, for they are often overlooked, even by the group members themselves.

Composition: Who Belongs to the Group? To understand a group, we must know something about the group's **composition**: the qualities of the individuals who are members of the group. The Adventure Expedition team, for example, differed from the other teams on Mt. Everest that year because each member of that group was a unique individual with specific talents, weaknesses, attitudes, values, and personality traits. Hall, the group's leader, was a world-class high-altitude climber. Andy Harris, a guide, was outgoing, physically fit, and passionate about climbing, but he had never been to Mt. Everest before. Beck Weathers, Frank Fischbeck, and Lou Kasischke were all clients: Weathers was "garrulous," Fischbeck was "dapper" and "genteel," and Kasischke was tall and athletic (Krakauer, 1997, p. 37).

Groups may be more than the sum of their parts but each part defines the whole (Moreland, 2013). A group with a member who is naturally boisterous, mean-spirited, hard-working, chill, or close-minded will be different from the group with a member who is domineering, self-sacrificing, lazy, anxious, or creative. A group with many members who have only just joined will differ from one with mostly long-term, veteran members. A group whose members differ from each other in terms of race, sex, economic background, and country of origin will differ from a group with far less diversity. Were we to assign 100 people to twenty 5-person groups, each group would differ from every other group because it joins together 5 unique individuals.

Boundaries: Who Does NOT Belong? The relationships that link members to one another define who is in the group and who is not. A group is boundaried in a psychological sense; those who are included in the group are recognized as members and those who are not part of the group are excluded outsiders. In some cases, these boundaries are publicly acknowledged: Both members and nonmembers know who belongs to an honor society, a rock band, or a baseball team. But in other cases, the boundaries may be indistinct or known only to the group members themselves. A secret society, for example, may not reveal its existence or its membership list to outsiders. A group's boundary may also be relatively permeable. In *open groups*, for example, membership is fluid; members may voluntarily come and go as they please with no consequences (and they often do), or the group may frequently vote members out of the group or invite new ones to join. In *closed groups*, in contrast, the membership roster changes more slowly, if at all. But, regardless of the reasons for membership fluctuations, open groups are especially unlikely to reach a state of equilibrium since members recognize that they may lose or relinquish their place within the group at any time. Members of such groups, especially those in which membership is dependent on voting or meeting

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stereotype A socially shared set of qualities, characteristics, and behavioral expectations ascribed to a particular group or category of people.

composition The individuals who constitute a group.

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Are Social Networks Groups?

Social networks are in most respects very group-like. Their members are linked to each other by social relationships, which can vary from the inconsequential and ephemeral to the deeply meaningful and long-enduring. Networks, however, lack clear boundaries that define who is in the network and who is not. To become part of a social network, an individual need only establish a relationship of some sort with a person who is already part of the network. In most social networking sites, for example, the only requirement to join a network is the acceptance of a link request from someone already linked to others in the network. If Helen and Rob are already linked, then Pemba can join their network by establishing a relationship with Helen or Rob. In consequence, social networks tend to be more fluid in terms of membership than groups with clearly identified boundaries, but they can also attract more diverse members to their ranks (Svensson, Neumayer, Banfield-Mumb, & Schossböck, 2015).

a particular standard, are more likely to monitor the actions of others. In contrast, closed groups are often more cohesive as competition for membership is irrelevant and group members anticipate future collaborations. Thus, in closed groups, individuals are more likely to focus on the collective nature of the group and to identify with the group (Ziller, 1965).

Size: How Large Is the Group? Jon Krakauer (1997), who chronicled the experiences of Adventure Expedition as it attempted its climb of Mt. Everest, admitted he was unsettled by the size of the group: "I'd never climbed as a member of such a large group … all my previous expeditions had been undertaken with one or two trusted friends, or alone" (p. 37).

A group's size influences many of its other features, for a small group will likely have different structures, processes, and patterns of interaction than a larger one. A two-person group is so small that it ceases to exist when one member leaves, and it can never be broken down into subgroups. The members of dyads (e.g., best friends, lovers) are sometimes linked by strong emotional bonds that make their dynamics so intense that they belong in a category all their own (Levine & Moreland, 2012). Larger groups can also have unique qualities, for the members are rarely connected directly to all other members, subgroups are very likely to form, and one or more leaders may be needed to organize and guide the group.

A group's size also determines how many *social ties*—links, relationships, connections, edges—are needed to join members to each other and to the group. The maximum number of ties within a group in which everyone is linked to everyone else is given by the equation $n(n - 1)/2$, where n is the number of people in the group. Only one relationship is needed to create a dyad, but as Figure 1.2 illustrates, the number of ties needed to connect all members grows as the group gets larger. Three relationships would be needed to join each member of a three-person group, but six, ten, and fifteen relationships are needed to link the members of four-, five-, and six-person groups. Even larger groups require even more ties. For example, a group the size of the Adventure Expedition (26 members) would require 325 ties to completely link each member to every other member.

Because of the limits of most people's capacity to keep track of so many social relationships, once the group surpasses about 150 individuals, members usually cannot connect with each and every member of the group (Dunbar, 2008). In consequence, in larger groups, members are connected to one another indirectly rather than directly. Beck Weathers might, for example, be linked to guide Mike Groom, and Groom might establish a bond with Jon Krakauer, but Weathers may not get to know Krakauer. In even larger groups, members

social network A set of interpersonally interconnected individuals or groups.

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