

Group Behavior

by Michael Stahl



The word "social" means: "relating to society or its organization." There is a special type of science that studies how human beings interact with each other and it is called "sociology." One quality of our society that sociologists, the type of scientists who study society, have looked closely at is mankind's desire to be a part of different groups. Sociologists call this "group behavior."

Sociologists believe that group behavior began in mankind a long time ago when man was more primitive. Back then, people did not have big homes made of concrete or brick to protect them from dangerous animals. People slept in caves and were out in the open during the day a lot more. They would look all around for food so that the species could continue living. Eventually, people began to realize that if they traveled and worked together, they could find more food and would be able to more effectively battle animals that threatened them. Bigger quantities of food and a better sense of safety helped humans survive and prosper.

As time went on, people began to see the benefits of being a part of a group. Groups provide companionship. People simply get to be around other people, which we as a species began to enjoy. Usually, this sense of companionship would be stronger felt if the group as a whole had a common purpose. This could also lead to members of a group feeling extra proud of themselves when they accomplish something, especially if it benefits the rest of the group. Some people also began to become leaders within their groups, which created a higher level of appreciation and respect for them from their peers. This marked the beginning of roles within a group.

A "role" is another word for a job within a group. Individuals in a group either naturally created a purpose for themselves or might have been given one by the group's leader. Some men of a group had the role of hunter, for example. Others may have been the builders of campfires.

Group behavior also included the creation of "norms" and "values." Norms are examples of what a group normally does over a period of time. Members of a group might all wake up at the same time and begin to carry out their various duties during the day, but repeat those same activities day after day. Values are a summary of what the group's goals might be or a general idea of what is acceptable behavior. Some groups might strongly believe in honesty and dislike theft.

There are actually some negative things that can come along with group behavior. From time to time, if a person is not accepted within a group, they might feel rejected and saddened. Other times, a group might find itself fighting a "common enemy," which is another group that is disliked as a whole because it may have different norms or values. Group behavior also makes it more likely that all of the members of a group will believe something just because one member says so, even if it is not true or favorable.

Group behavior is the basis for so much of what we see in our society today. Cities, towns, and countries were built because of a group behavior that created common values. The same can be said for all of the large organized religions of the world, not to mention little after-school clubs that focus on art or the game of chess.

primitive prim · i · tive**Advanced Definition****adjective**

1. of, pertaining to, or at an early stage or undeveloped condition.
2. of, pertaining to, or at the early stages of human or evolutionary development.

primitive symbols found in caves

3. simple; undeveloped; unsophisticated.

primitive art

primitive houses

noun

1. a human being of a primitive society.
2. an unschooled or self-taught artist.
3. a work of such an artist.

Spanish cognate

primitivo: The Spanish word *primitivo* means primitive.

These are some examples of how the word or forms of the word are used:

1. In 1925, the societies in the Amazon were small and isolated, eking out a **primitive** existence in tough conditions.
2. On a windy stretch of beach on the coast of Holland, a skeletal creature crawls across the sand. It stands as high as a person and seems to have as many legs as a centipede. A close-up look reveals **primitive** senses and the beginnings of a brain.

role

role

Definition

noun

1. the character played by an actor.

I have a large role in the school play.

Advanced Definition

noun

1. the character played by an actor or actress.

The role of Hamlet is a challenge for any actor.

2. the customary or expected behavior associated with a particular position in a society.

She feared that she could not fulfill the role of a royal princess.

3. the function or particular part in something that a thing or person plays.

We know that vitamins play an important role in nutrition.

There will be an investigation into the vice president's role in the conspiracy.

Spanish cognate

rol: The Spanish word *rol* means role.

These are some examples of how the word or forms of the word are used:

1. Many experts believe low-calorie sweeteners can play a **role** in helping some kids live healthy lifestyles. But they're not the whole answer.
2. Screening tests look for early signs of cancer before a person develops symptoms. Studies show that screening has played a **role** in the declining rates of cervical cancer and colorectal cancer.
3. Another key to healthy skin is to always wear sunscreen. "The sun exposure you get before you are 18 years old plays a big **role** in the health of your skin later in life," says Skolnik.
4. "Getting rid of zoos would be a tragedy for all animals," says Steve Feldman, senior vice president of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. He says zoos play a major **role** in educating people about animals and promoting wildlife conservation.

5. Superstar WNBA player and Olympic gold medalist Lisa Leslie tells Current Health that she was always taller than her classmates. "I didn't feel awkward, because being tall and being smart allowed me to get put into a lot of leadership **roles** early," she says.
6. When the young rats reached puberty, Pellis examined their brains. Sure enough: The brains of the rats that had a lot of playtime were better developed. Their prefrontal cortexes were more mature. The prefrontal cortex is thought to play a **role** in controlling complex behaviors.
7. Señora Perez briefly told Maya about Eva Perón, who played a major **role** in improving the lives of the poor and fighting for women's rights while she served as first lady. She passed away in 1952, but her memory has been preserved in a musical-and later a film-written about her life.
8. The next time Jason went to Ho Tep Wildlife Reserve, on a camping trip with his dad, he made a point of observing the wildlife. He spent twenty minutes watching a copperhead snake slither across the forest floor, wondering about its **role** in the larger system.
9. Educators and lawmakers hope that providing good food choices at school will help kids make good food choices at home. "Schools play an important **role** in improving the nutrition of young people," Julia Lear, director of the Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, told Senior Edition.
10. Once she started looking more closely, Pedersen realized that working muscles produce many different compounds. She called those compounds myokines, and she's identified a whopping 600 of them so far. "Most of the 600 myokines are totally unknown, and we have absolutely no clue about their **role**," Pedersen says.

society

SO · CI · E · TY

Definition

noun

1. all the members of a community or group.

It is important for every society to agree on certain laws.

Advanced Definition

noun

1. a group of persons associated for a particular purpose or activity.

the local art society

2. the members of a community or group considered together.
3. all human beings considered together, esp. in regard to their group relationships.
4. the social activities of upper-class or fashionable people.
5. the individuals that make up such a class or group.
6. company; companionship.

His society is pleasant to me.

adjective

1. relating to elegant, fashionable, or genteel society.

a society woman

the society pages of the newspaper

Spanish cognate

sociedad: The Spanish word *sociedad* means society.

These are some examples of how the word or forms of the word are used:

1. It is no surprise that a **society** which so valued words would fall in love with paper.
2. So what exactly is gold? What are the properties of this metal that has become so important to human **society**?

3. Eventually, as the planet warmed, agricultural communities replaced Cro-Magnon hunting **societies**. "Cro-Magnons adapted to changing climate," concludes Fagan, "just as we are today."
4. I was lavished upon. Expensive dinners, invitations to the best parties, high **society**, under-the-table gifts of all sorts-there seemed no end to the citizenry's gratitude.
5. Jewish people were often forced to change their practices in order to become part of mainstream **society**. Reform Judaism began in Germany in order to help Jewish people do this.
6. Sometime in the 1870s, a Treasury Department captain gave the banner to a Connecticut Civil War veteran. Years later, the veteran gave the flag to his son. The son then presented the flag, in 1922, to the historical **society**, where it remained for 76 years.
7. PE is a great way to get and stay healthy. It gives you a chance to burn off calories. In some cases, it might be the only exercise kids get each day. The problem of obesity has infected our **society**. PE is a great way to fight that troubling trend.
8. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need of having nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in **society** that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.
9. "The American people should not have to choose between [being] a welcoming **society** and a lawful society," Bush said during a recent speech in Arizona. "We can have both at the same time."
10. It's important to understand how slavery affected the entire country, because its effects linger through discrimination, Singer says. "Kids see slavery as something that happened in the deep past," he told Senior Edition. "I want children to know that we still live with the effects of that slavery **society**."

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is "group behavior"?

- A. mankind's desire to study sociology
- B. mankind's desire to be part of one group
- C. mankind's desire to not be part of different groups
- D. mankind's desire to be part of different groups

2. Being part of a group is an effect. What caused people to become part of a group a long time ago?

- A. People wanted to believe something just because one member said it was so.
- B. People wanted to be able to better survive and prosper.
- C. People wanted to be alone.
- D. People wanted to have big homes made of concrete or brick to protect them from dangerous animals.

3. Groups accept certain behaviors according to what their members believe to be correct. Which sentence from the passage best supports this conclusion?

- A. "Individuals in a group either naturally created a purpose for themselves or might have been given one by the group's leader."
- B. "Group behavior is the basis for so much of what we see in our society today."
- C. "Group behavior also makes it more likely that all of the members of a group will believe something just because one member says so."
- D. "Norms are examples of what a group normally does over a period of time."

4. Based on the passage, what might the identity of a group be based on?

- A. the group's values
- B. the group's location
- C. the group's "common enemy"
- D. the group's size

5. What is the passage mostly about?

- A. how to use group behavior to better interact with other people
- B. how to be accepted in a group
- C. groups in different societies
- D. group behavior

6. Read the following sentences: "Eventually, people began to realize that if they traveled and worked together, they could find more food and would be able to more effectively battle animals that threatened them. Bigger quantities of food and a better sense of safety helped humans survive and **prosper**."

Based on the passage, what does the word "**prosper**" most nearly mean?

- A. to move
- B. to fight
- C. to die out
- D. to succeed

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Values are a summary of what the group's goals might be or a general idea of what is acceptable behavior; _____, some groups might strongly believe in honesty and dislike theft.

- A. otherwise
- B. on the contrary
- C. however
- D. for example

8. Describe at least two advantages of being in a group by using information from the passage.

9. Group behavior also makes it more likely that all of the members of a group will believe something just because one member says so. Explain why this may be a negative aspect of group behavior by using information from the passage.

10. Explain whether a group fighting a "common enemy" is a positive or negative thing. Use information from the passage to support your argument.
