
UNIT 1 DEFINITION, CONCEPT AND RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In earlier courses you might have got a clear picture about what is psychology, what is the biological basis of our behaviour, how does the human development take place, how research in psychology is done and quantified etc. From this course onwards, we are entering into the 'social' world of an individual because most of our behaviours is a result of our interaction with people and their influence on our behaviour. Also most of these interactions involve other people and it mainly occurs in social context and social situation. The branch of psychology which studies the 'individual behaviour' in social context is called as 'social psychology'. Social psychology is a very important branch of psychology,

combining the elements from two strong disciplines – sociology and psychology. Block 1 explains the concept of social psychology and its relevance to individual behaviours. It explains the various definitions of social psychology traces its historical developments and landmarks as well as further explains the relation of social psychology to other discipline. In establishing as a new discipline, social psychology enriched its research, by adopting various research methods – both experimental and non-experimental as well as including modern research through internet. Further the block 1 studies the most important concept of social psychology – social cognition – a process of understanding and predicting the behaviour of self and others i.e. social perception and person perception. It goes on to explore the definition, structure and functional process as well as cognitive and dynamic basis of social perception and person perception.

In this unit, we are going to introduce to you the concepts of social behaviour, social interaction and social influence. Next you see the nature of social psychology in general and the definition of social psychology. Further you will be studying various methods which social psychologists employ in carrying out his / her research about the different social phenomena.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the terms – social behaviour, social interaction and social influence;
- discuss that that the larger part of our life and behaviour is social;
- explain the way needs are satisfied in the social context;
- distinguish between physical and social environment;
- analysis the different types of research methods used in the field of social psychology;
- explore various experimental and non-experimental methods used by social psychologists; and
- identify the merits and demerits of the different methods of research.

1.2 DEFINITION AND CONCEPT OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The study of individual in the social context is the subject matter of the field of psychology called social psychology. Social psychologists not only try to understand the social behaviour and social influence but have developed many methods to measure the social phenomena like leadership, modeling and prejudice etc. They employ many experimental as well as non-experimental methods to carry out their research in the field of social psychology. As dealing with human life and human problems, social psychologists also take care to follow the ethical code and to avoid common bias in social science research.

The various definitions of social psychology are given:

- Social psychology is the discipline that explores deeply the various aspects of this social interaction.

- Social psychology is a branch of psychology which is concerned with the social aspect of life – how people interaction with and think about others. This branch of knowledge studies human behaviour in all its perspective which further helps in establishing equal relationships and solving social problems.
- Baron and Byrne (2006) define social psychology as the scientific field that seeks to understand the nature and causes of individual behaviour in social situations. In other words, social psychologists seek to understand how we think about and interact with others.
- Social psychology attempts to understand how thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individual are influenced by actual, imagined and implied presence of others.
- Social psychology is the study of how people influence other people.

1.2.1 Concept of Social Psychology

It is a truth that human actions do not take place in a vacuum. Every behaviours occur in some ‘physical context’ and most of what we do take place in the presence of others – that is, in an interpersonal context or social context. Moreover, a considerable portion of the behaviour that individuals perform when alone is based on ‘past encounters’ with other people.

Psychology studies behaviour which is a result of individuals thoughts and feelings, but individuals thoughts and feelings are inferred from his expressed or overt behaviour. Behaviours which include learning, problem solving, perceiving are the ‘overt behaviour’, on the other hand, behaviours like dreaming, imaging, memorising represents ‘covert behaviour’.

There is another category of behaviour. Behaviour which is result or caused by or occurs because of others presence or influence is called *social behaviour*. This social behaviour is of great significance to social psychology. Whenever our psychological processes of perceiving, learning, motivating, decision making etc. are influenced by or a result of or related to / or occur in a social context, these processes are called as social perception, social learning, social motivations, group conformity respectively. These behaviours which have a social context and occur in social environment and involve social stimuli are the main subject matter of social psychology.

1.2.2 Concept of Social Behaviour

If I ask you to make a list of all the activities which you perform from the time you get up till you sleep, you will observe that about 20% of these activities are just ‘behaviours’ but the remaining 80% of these are ‘social behaviours’. This would make you understand social behaviour in terms of the significance of ‘others’ in our life, as most of our time of the day is spent in interacting with other members of our family or society. A careful look at these ‘**social interaction**’ would make it very clear that in many of these interactions, our behaviour is influenced by others and we influence others behaviour. So our life is not only ‘social’ but our social interactions to a large extent are shaped, influenced and changed as a result of social influence. A major part of our behaviour occurs in a social context, as well as in an environment involving ‘others’.

1.2.3 Concept of Social Interaction

Unlike animals that come together either for progeny or protecting themselves from danger, human being is a truly social animal. Each one of us is surrounded by and interacts with at least one or two individuals who are close to us. Human being live, grow and strive within the close interpersonal relationship. Many of our needs are satisfied in this social context. In satisfying the needs one establishes contacts, co-operates with other people and adjusts with other members of the society. Actions that are performed by the individual in relation to the members of the society are called 'Social Actions and Interaction' as these actions affect two or more individuals. This results in action, social actions and interaction. This interaction with others is called 'Social Interaction' and this social interaction is the basis for establishing lasting relationship in life. Two mechanisms underlie every social interaction, these are:

- 1) **Social interaction requires a social contact or social relationship:** Every social situation involves social contact at least between two people without which no interaction can take place. This contact may be direct or indirect and can have negative and positive impact. Positive social contact gives rise to pro-social behaviours like co-operation, organisation as simulation, adjustment, adaptation and accommodation. Negative social contact may retract a person away from entering into social interaction and even if s/he 'has to', it results in unhelpful social behaviours like unhealthy competition, aggression etc.
- 2) **Social interaction involves communication:** Social interaction between any two individuals involves some form of communication that is verbal or non-verbal without which the social interaction cannot take place. As is known, social interaction takes place at three levels, a) Individual to individual, b) Individual to groups, and c) Group to group level.

1.2.4 Concept of Social Influence

Each one of us depends on others to satisfy, many of our day to day needs – food, clothing, housing, love, security. This interdependence produces interaction between persons. In the course of this interaction an individual is influenced by parents, friends, teachers and they are also in turn influenced by the person. Thus other people affect and influence our outlook, our belief our values and so on marginally or profoundly. Such influence are exerted directly and deliberately, subtly and implied. The individual behaviour is influenced by this social influence, as for example: Sita is newly married and comes to her in-laws house in a new city. Her behaviour is more likely to be influenced by the directions g etc. which slowly do influence her husband and children. Our social life is thus a process of mutual influence and change which enrich our relationship in a social context.

1.2.5 Scope of Social Psychology

Social psychology concentrates on the individual behaviour in the social contact, so the subject matter of social psychology is the interactions of individuals with other individuals and society. It is the social world, based upon the relations of humans to their fellow beings which furnishes the subject matter of social psychology. The scope of social psychology includes:

- 1) Social stimuli example: books, any situation, other people) and social stimulus situations (Flag hosting, Deepawali, Christmas and Ramzan).
- 2) Individual's reactions and experiences which arise from social situations.
- 3) Impact of social environment on the individual social behaviour is a result of four factors:
 - i) Characteristics of other persons;
 - ii) Cognitive processes;
 - iii) Physical environment; and
 - iv) Cultural context.

Examples: Whenever two or more people are interacting, their behaviour is guided by the traits of 'the other' person with which they are interacting and depending on the behaviour of the other person (whether dominant, co-operative or submissive), our response to it would differ. Example: child behaving in a docile manner in front of teacher or parent.

Also how we react and interpret and understand the social situation depends to a great extent on how we perceive the social stimuli, what aspects of social situation influences us etc. Example: when two individuals are bitterly, in that one person is not speaking a word and the other is uttering all the bad words, we might sympathize with the first one and interpret the event accordingly.

- 4) The physical context in which an event takes place is also very crucial. For example: when two people belonging to different cultural and ethnic group start fighting during the already riot prone, locality, it will get a different meaning than when the scenario occurs in a normal context.
- 5) Each social behaviour has a specific cultural context and as a result, same behaviour may be interpreted in an entirely different way. Cultural norms of each culture provides that context and so many times the behaviour would be misinterpreted by others who do not belong to that culture – example: women not hiding their face (by their veil) in front of elders would be amounted to insulting the elders, the same behaviour would 'pass off' as normal in other context of urban setting.

Self Assessment Questions 1

Exercise-I

Match the Column I and Column II

A) For the following statements, indicate what type of social situation and words category each statement indicate

Column I

- 1) A child smiling and giving his toy to another child
- 2) A stranger looking at you
- 3) Your neighbour smiling at you
- 4) A film

Column II

- a) Social behaviour
- b) Non-social behaviour
- c) Social interaction
- d) Social influence

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| 5) A novel | e) Social stimuli |
| 6) Independence day | f) Social situation |
| 7) Your child learns to use bad words from neighbours sons | |
| 8) Teachers day | |
| 9) Children playing with each other | |
| 10) Children burns his hand | |
| 11) After a scolding a child cries | |
| 12) Child goes and sits near his friend | |
| B) Write down a list of five behaviours of yours which are a result of some social influence. Also name that agent who is exerting the social influence. | |
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1.3 RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

1.3.1 Goals of Research in Social Psychology

Social psychological research has four goals:

- 1) **Description:** A major goal is to provide careful and systematic descriptions of social behaviour that permit social psychologists to make reliable generalisations about how people act in various social settings. Example: Are men more aggressive than women's.
- 2) **Causal analysis:** Much research in psychology seeks to establish cause and effect relationship, because scientific inquiry in the research is to establish cause and effect relations. Example: Does college education make students more liberal in their social attitudes.
- 3) **Theory building:** Third goal is to develop theories about social behaviour which help social psychologists understand why people behave the way they do. This can further lead to suggest new predictions that can be tested in further research.
- 4) **Application:** Knowledge gained by the above three attempt can help to solve everyday social problems.

1.3.2 Sources of Research in Social Psychology

Social psychology is the scientific study of social behaviour. These are a diverse range of methods available to social psychologists. Any research begins with a hunch or hypothesis (a tentative solution), that the researcher wants to test. There are two ways in which a researcher chooses the hypothesis.

- 1) People often generate hypothesis from previous theories and research. Many studies stem from a researcher's dissatisfaction with existing theories and explanation. Example: Leon Festinger was dissatisfied with 'behaviourism' to explain attitude change. He thus formulated a new approach called the dissonance theory that made specific predictions about when and how people would change their attitude. In this way new research is continuously carried out in order to update the existing theory.
- 2) Theory is not the only way to derive a new hypothesis in social psychology. Researchers often observe a phenomenon in everyday life that they find curious and interesting. The researcher then constructs a theory related to that phenomenon, thus generating new theory. Example: The mere presence of other person that led to better performance lead to the famous phenomena of 'social facilitation'.

The research methods used by social psychology could be divided into two broad categories: 1) Experimental method, and 2) Non-experimental method.

1.4 EXPERIMENTAL METHODS

An experiment involves manipulating one variable – which we call the Independent Variable (IV) and then seeing whether this has an effect on a second variable, which we refer to as the Dependent Variable (DV). To explain this, we describe an experiment conducted by Scheier and Carver (1977) in which the independent variable 'self awareness' was manipulated by having participants either watch themselves in a mirror or not. These two levels of self awareness high self awareness (mirror present) and low self awareness (mirror not present) formed the two experimental conditions. The prediction was that people in the high self-awareness would show more extreme emotional responses. Participant's self reported emotions were measured. These emotions provided the dependent variable in the experiment.

The experimental method could further be divided into two sub-categories i) Laboratory method, ii) Field method.

1.4.1 Laboratory Method

The majority of experiments are conducted in a laboratory. In some studies, the laboratory is equipped with television, video cameras, computer monitors, microphones and other experimental apparatuses. In other cases, the laboratory is a simple room with a table and chair wherein a participant fills out a questionnaire. The benefit of conducting a laboratory experiment is that conditions could be highly controlled. Putting it in another way, within the confines of the laboratory, everything (example: environment, temperament, instructions given by the researcher) apart from the independent variable can be held constant. This way if changes in the independent variable are accompanied by changes in the dependent variable, we can very confidently say that the changes in the dependent variable are caused by the independent variable. Another benefit of experiments conducted in such a controlled environment is that they can be replicated, which would otherwise be more difficult to create outside the laboratory. Laboratory experiments have been used to study a wide range of social phenomena and have formed the basis for a number of highly influenced theories.

The *Advantages and Disadvantages* of Laboratory method are:

- 1) Although the high degree of control over conditions allows us to infer causality from the finding – it also makes the experiment rather artificial i.e. the experiments lacks external validity.
- 2) Information that participants pickup from the experimental context that leads them to guess what the experimenter is predicting will happen. When this happens it will influence the ‘behaviour’ which the experimenter is looking for because the internal mental processes of the participant cannot be controlled.
- 3) Experimenters themselves may also pose a risk to the validity of an experiment. ‘Experimenter effects’ are subtle cues or signals that are given out by an experimenter who knows the experimental hypothesis – ex: body language, eye movements, tone of voice.

1.4.2 Field Method

Experiments are not only confined to the laboratory. They are also conducted in naturalistic settings. For example given a situation; wherein an individual requires help, how many people come forward to help and why? Field experiments have greater external validity (not being artificial but genuine) than laboratory experiment. They are less likely to be influenced by ‘demand characteristics’ a participants typically have no idea that they are taking part in a study.

The Advantage and Disadvantage of Field Method are:

- 1) The situation is not nearly as controlled as in a laboratory situation and so the impact of external influences cannot be ruled out.
- 2) It is also not possible to randomly assign participants to conditions.

1.5 NON-EXPERIMENTAL METHODS

Researchers have three options. They can:

- 1) Ask research participants to report on their behaviour, thoughts or feeling – through self report.
- 2) They can observe questioned participant directly – observation
- 3) They can go to an archive and use data originally collected for other purposes.

Although experiments are the best way of determining cause and effect, there are many circumstances where they are practically not feasible. If we are interested to know how gender, ethnicity or age affects behaviour, we cannot assign participants to different conditions of an experimental method. Moreover, when social psychologists are interested to study psychological phenomenon on a broad societal level (ex: ethnic prejudice), experimental method cannot be used. In such instances a number of non-experimental methods are available to a social psychologist. These are: i) Observation method, ii) Archival method, iii) Case study, iv) Correlational method, and v) Survey method.

1.5.1 Observation Method

In social psychology, the observers are trained as social scientists who set out to answer questions about a particular social phenomena by observation and coding it according to a prearranged set of criteria. This method varies according to the

degree to which the observer actively participates in the scene. At one extreme the observer is a non participant. S/he neither participates nor intervenes in any way as for example: a researcher is interested in children's social behaviour may stand outside a playground to observe. Children at play in some situations, by their very nature, require observer participants, who observe, but tries not to alter the situation in any way, for example – to get to know the intricacies of certain social phenomena like rituals, cultural way. The observer can be a participant as a friend or relative. Certain behaviours are difficult to observe as they occur rarely or privately. It is confined to one particular group of people, setting, and activity.

1.5.2 Archival Method

Another way that social psychologist can observe social phenomenon without conducting an experiment is to re-analyse existing data. The researcher examines the accumulated document or archives of a culture, for example; diaries, novels, suicide notes, television shows, movies, magazines, newspaper articles, advertising, sexual violence etc.

Archival analysis can tell us a great deal about the society's values and beliefs. It has got two advantages. It is inexpensive and it can study the change over time frame. This is particularly useful when researches are interested in the effect of societal events on behaviours, which have occurred in the past. This research comes under 'archival research' first conducted by Hovland and Sears (1940).

1.5.3 Case Study Method

Other non-experimental methods are field studies and case studies. Case study is a study of a particular participant or a small group of participants which involve a detailed and often descriptive investigation. Example: Behaviour of people after the earthquake.

1.5.4 Correlation Method

In correlation studies, the researcher carefully observers and records the relationship between (or among) two or more factors technically known as variables. For example: Is physical attractiveness is related to a student's popularity with other students. In a correlation design, the research does not influence the student's behaviour in any way but merely records information.

The hallmark of an experimental design is intervention – with putting people in controlled situation or have confederates. Correlation research asks if there is an association between the variables and whether this association is high (+ve) or low (-ve) or neutral (no correlation). Example: whether or not watching violence on television is related to aggressive behaviour.

The *Advantages and Disadvantage* of Correlational method are:

- 1) Correlation designs enable research to study problems in which intervention is impossible.
- 2) This design is efficient. It allows research to collect more information and relationship.
- 3) No clear cut evidence of cause and effect

1.5.5 Survey Method

It is a research method that involves asking participants to respond to a series of questions, through interviews or questionnaires. Poll survey, marketing survey are the best examples. Surveys can be administered to a large, sample with relative ease and at little expense because surveys are gathered from large numbers and researchers can be sure of it is genuinity. The downside to questionnaire is that if they are not very carefully designed they can be misinterpreted by participants. There are also a number of response biases that participants have a tendency to blindly agree with positively worded questions and frequently fail to use the full range of possible responses like 'I don't know' etc.

1.6 OTHER RESEARCH METHODS

As psychology advanced and become global, and started focusing on cross cultural social phenomena, this method became a very important method.

1.6.1 Cross Cultural Method

It has two goals (i) demonstrates that a particular psychological process or law is universe and it operates the same way in all human being across various cultures. (ii) explore the differences among human beings, by examining how culture influences the basic social psychological process.

1.6.2 Research Through Internet

Recently social psychology has started to conduct research using the internet. The internet offers several advantages to researchers.

- i) Internet makes it easier to recruit participants who come from diverse background distant geographic regions or specific group.
- ii) The information collected from the participants is automatically recorded. This increases efficiency of data collection.
- iii) Internet research is less expensive.
- iv) Internet chat rooms and bulletin boards provide a rich sample of human social behaviour, where people discuss current social issues or hobbies on the online forums and study many topics including communication, prejudice and spread of new ideas. In research:
 - Same subjects can participate in many studies more than once
 - The identity, responses in a frivolous and malicious manner.
 - Impossible to monitor participant's behaviour or undesirable distractions.

Self Assessment Questions 2

Exercise-II

- 1) Below are given contain topics find out which research method would suit them
 - A child reactions to a stranger.
 - A behaviour of criminal after rehabilitation.
 - Percentage of relapses in alcoholics.

- Studying the celebrity status and suicidal rate among them.
- Public opinion about homosexual individual.
- Study of 'twitter' or 'blog' to check mentally health or unhealthy statements.
- Studying peoples pro-social or helping behaviour using a confederate.

2) Write examples from T.V. and media about violation of ethical standards.

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1.7 RESEARCH ETHICS

Regardless of the method used to conduct research in social psychology, because it involves people, social psychologist needs to be aware of a number of ethical issues. To ensure that research is not physically or psychologically harmful to participants, in 1972, the American Psychological Association suggested a set of principles for ethical conduct to guide the conduction of research.

- 1) **Participant Welfare:** It is essential that the physical and psychological welfare of participant is protected. Although it is not too difficult to determine the extent of physical harm to the participants, it is indeed difficult to determine the extent of psychological harm. Some experiments may leave a negative psychological impact (fear, stress, anxiety) for example: Eliciting anger may for example lead to temporarily depressed self esteem (Carver and Glass 1978). So efforts should be made to ensure that the negative psychological impact should be inconsequential and short lived.
- 2) **Deception:** In order to avoid the problem caused by 'demand characteristics' or subjective bias. It is important that participant is not aware of the aim of the study Milgram (1963) deceived participants by making them believe that they were really administering electric shocks. This was necessary to gauge the participants reactions. Many other experiments use confederates – someone who is a participant but who is actually an actor instructed by the experimenter in order to test a particular hypothesis. However, most deception is of a trival nature, and the participants are told the full purpose of the experiment after completion and there is no evidence that deception causes long term harm.
- 3) **Confidentiality:** Participants in social psychology research is often required to disclose information of a personal or intimate nature. To reassure participants that this information will not be used against them in any way social psychologists need to inform participants that data derived from their participation will be completely confidential. Thus the anonymity of participants is also usually safeguarded by identifying them with a 'number' (roll number) rather than name.

- 4) **Informed consent and debriefing:** It is a well known practice to obtain informed consent from individuals prior to their participation in a study. The participants provide their full and voluntary consent in writing or they can withdraw from the experiment. After the experiment, participants need to be fully debriefed, this involve telling them the true purpose of the experiment. It gives experimenters the opportunity to demonstrate the importance and relevance of the research and the participants an opportunity to contribute to the genuine cause to the field (of social psychology) research. One of the important risks is the invasion of privacy, which should be respected and valued. The researcher who studies sensitive topics as sex, drug, alcohol use, illegal behaviour, religion, beliefs. Must be protected the risk involved minimal, should be – possible risk for the participants in the research should not be greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

1.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have studied the various terms like social behaviour, social interaction and social influence and their significance in understanding the concept of social psychology. We also came to know the scope of social psychology which basically involves social stimuli and social situations. Later we have studied the different definitions of social psychology. Next we concentrated on how a social psychologist conducts its research. Firstly we became aware that the research starts with setting appropriate goals of research i.e. description, casual analysis theory building application and exploring the basic sources of topic generation from earlier research or personal knowledge and experience.

Lastly you were provided with a detailed understanding of various experimental, laboratory, field, non-experimental, observation, archival, case study, correlation and survey methods. Also you would have learnt the new research through internet and how to take care of conducting a fair and scientific research by following ethical code of research.

1.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Describe the terms social behaviour, social interaction and social influence and explain their relation to the concept of social psychology.
- 2) Enumerate the goals of researches and its sources.
- 3) What is an experimental method? Describe the types of experimental methods.
- 4) What are the non-experimental methods? Mention the types of non-experimental methods and describe in detail any one method, critically examining its merits and demerits.

1.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

Baron, R.A and Donn Bryne (2006) *Social Psychology*, Prentice Hall of India 10th Edition, New Delhi – 110 001.

Crisp, R.J and Rhiannon N., Turner *Essential Social Psychology*, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

1.11 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Self Assessment Questions 1 (Exercise I)

- 1) c
- 2) b
- 3) a
- 4) e
- 5) e
- 6) f
- 7) d
- 8) f
- 9) c
- 10) b
- 11) d
- 12) a

Self Assessment Questions 2 (Exercise II)

- 1) Observation method
- 2) Case study method
- 3) Correlation method
- 4) Archival method
- 5) Survey method

UNIT 2 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND OTHER RELATED DISCIPLINES

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
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- 2.2 Historical Perspective
 - 2.2.1 Social Philosophers
 - 2.2.2 Pioneer Anthropologists
 - 2.2.3 British Evolutionists
 - 2.2.4 Early Sociologists
- 2.3 Landmarks in the History of Social Psychology
- 2.4 Social Psychology and other Related Disciplines
 - 2.4.1 Levels of Analysis of Behaviour
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 - 2.4.5 Social Psychology and Ethics
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 - 2.4.7 Social Psychology and Economics
 - 2.4.8 Significance of Social Psychology Today
- 2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.6 Unit End Questions
- 2.7 Suggested Readings
- 2.8 Answers to Self Assessment Questions

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In previous unit we have been acquainted with the concepts of social behaviour, social interaction and social influenced and also have define the nature and scope of social psychology. We also took a close glance at various research methods which a social psychologists use. In this unit we will see the contributions made by early theorists like social psychologist, philosophers, pioneer anthropologists, British evolutionists, early sociologists and others to create an awareness about the social psychological concepts. We will also touch upon other important landmarks in the history of social psychology, bringing it to the status of the field as it today. Next we will see the close association of the filed of social psychology to other social sciences. In this unit we will also discuss the emergence of social psychology as a separate discipline.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After readings this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the journey of ‘emerging discipline’ of social psychology;

- identify the various landmarks of social psychology; and
- discuss the close link among social psychology and related disciplines.

2.2 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Social psychology combines elements of psychology and social sciences and has a complex genealogy, which includes strains from many disciplines. It came on scene about 1900, after the way had been prepared by at least four groups of scholars: social philosophers, pioneer anthropologists, British evolutionists and early sociologists.

2.2.1 Social Philosophers

Ancient, medieval and early modern philosophers speculated widely about human nature, heredity and instincts, impulses, customs and social relations. In the writing of Plato Aristotle, Montesquieu, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and many others, the problems of social living were given considerable attention.

2.2.2 Pioneer Anthropologists

In 1860, two German scholars, Herman Steinthal and Mortiz Lazarus, established a journal called Folk psychology, with the intention of discovering the mental processes of primitive people by studying their language, mythology, religion, literature and art 'Group minds' and folk souls', these concepts inspired William Wundt.

Wundt felt that higher social processes could be explored in the laboratory, but they had to be investigated by way of the first protests against the ancient doctrine that the group may have a collective mind, soul or psyche over and above the minds of the individuals in the group. But he could not stick to this individualised approach like most of his contemporaries; he dealt with collective minds and grand generalisations about the evolution of culture. Nonetheless, Steinthal, Lazarus and Wundt did bring anthropology and psychology within speaking distance of each other.

2.2.3 British Evolutionists

Charles Darwin made a tremendous contribution to social science as well as biological science. His statement of the theory of evolution in 'The origin of species' changed the course of scientific thinking.

Spencer, Darwin's contemporary is known for applying evolutionary concepts to social life. His principle contributions to social psychology were his insistence that life is a process of continual adjustment of internal to external relations (society) and his emphasis on study of social environment. He foresaw a "social science" which would study how the individual becomes an organic part of a group and how the group becomes an organic unity.

2.2.4 Early Sociologists

Auguste Comte, the 19th century French author is considered the founder of sociology and possibly the first genuine social scientist. He stated clearly the idea that the human mind can develop only through society, the individual must be considered always in a social setting. Comte was one of the first to discuss the existence and importance of social setting.

Another pioneering French sociologist important to social psychology was Emile Durkheim. His well known theory of 'collective representations' stressed the significance of group experiences.

Max Weber, a German sociologist-economist-historian, influenced later social psychologists, both directly and indirectly. His analysis of bureaucracy in the government and business organisations and the effects of Protestantism on economic processes, as well as his studies of comparative religions, have stimulated the research of contemporary social scientists.

2.3 LANDMARKS IN THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The idea of studying social processes in a scientific manner emerged in the mid 19th century French thinker Auguste Comte (1838) helped to lay the foundations for social psychology by arguing that society and social issues should be studied in the same scientific manner as natural science. Although it is difficult to pinpoint an exact starting point, the study of social psychology gathered pace at the turn of the 20th century. In 1895, French writer Gustav LeBon proposed a theory of crowd behaviour, arguing that people behave badly in groups because they are controlled by a crowd mind. This work was a precursor to much later work on social influence and aggression. It was the first work to focus on the way in which the behaviour of individuals is influenced by their social context. In 1897, Norman Triplett conducted what was probably the first social psychology experiment, when he systematically compared children who completed a task alone or in the presence of others who were completing the same task. He found that performing in the presence of others led children to complete the task more quickly because it aroused a competitive instinct.

In 1908, the first two textbooks on social psychology were published. English psychologist William McDougall wrote 'An Introduction to Social Psychology', which grounded social behaviour in biology, talking about the role of instincts, which he defined as inherited or innate dispositional characteristics, in producing primary emotions (for example fear, anger, curiosity and tenderness) in response to stimuli in the social world. American sociologist Edward Ross wrote Social Psychology from a rather different perspective, focusing on more complex social phenomena such as crowd behaviour, culture, conformity, and conflict.

The first half of the 20th century saw an explosion in social psychology research. Many of the classic social psychology studies that occurred in this period. In 1934, in an investigation of behaviour and attitudes of American hotel owners towards a Chinese couple. LaPierre found that people's attitudes and behaviour do not always correspond with one another. In 1935, Sherif experimentally demonstrated the role of social norms in influencing people's behaviour when they are in the presence of others. In 1940, Hovland and Sears proposed and tested a theory that explained why people behaved aggressively, based on how people take out their frustrations about their lives on a scapegoat.

The Second World War had a profound influence on the direction of social psychological theory and research. At around this time, societies began to realise that prejudice against ethnic minorities was irrational and morally wrong (Harding, Kutner, Proshanky & Chein, 1954). Psychologists became interested in the idea that bringing together members of different groups would lead to mutual regard

and respect. The battlefield in the Second World War also provided a good opportunity to consider the effects of contact.

Research of this kind resulted in Gordon Allport's classic 1954 text, 'The Nature of Prejudice', in which he proposed the 'contact hypothesis', the idea that bringing different groups together would reduce prejudice, although critically, only under certain conditions (Allport, 1954). At around the same time a series of classic studies were conducted by Sherif and colleagues looking at group dynamics at a summer camp for boys (Sherif & Sherif, 1953; Sherif, White, & Harvey, 1955). This research demonstrated two of the key conditions for intergroup contact to reduce prejudice – cooperation and common goals – as well as providing the basis for a classic theory of intergroup conflict: realistic group conflict theory.

Events during the Second World War also generated research on conformity in an attempt to understand events in Germany. Solomon Asch (1956) experimentally investigated the impact of group members on the individual while, in one of the most famous social psychology experiments, Milgram (1963) explored why people follow orders, even where those orders involve causing harm to other people. At around the same time, Adorno and colleagues (1950) considered whether people with a certain type of personality were more likely to behave with prejudice towards others, in their research on the authoritarian personality.

In the later half of the 20th century, through to the present day, research on social psychology has continued to rapidly expand and diversify. The 1960s saw research on a diverse range of topics including aggression, pro-social behaviour and interpersonal relationships, while the role of cognition in social psychology came to the fore in the 1970's.

It is only around 1970-80's social psychology become 'application oriented' many practical and social aspects of human behaviour were researched. Some of these were:

Personal health – example: Life style and social behaviour

Social support and individual behaviour

Legal processes – example: How valid in the eye witnesses testimony

Work setting – example: Effect of different work setting – climate, structure and role affects the individual behaviour. Around 1990, the field of social psychology extended to become more global with its in multicultural perspective. The main focus here was to study the generalisations of certain social behaviours to other cultures; and Which aspects of social behaviour are cultures specific?

Self Assessment Questions 1

Exercise-I

1) Arrange the following events according to historical timeframe.

| Column I | Column II |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| 1) Durkleim | a) Social norms |
| 2) Darwin | b) Crowd behaviour |
| 3) Sherif | c) Collective representations |
| 4) Milgrion | d) Folk psychology and groupmind |
| 5) Lebon | e) The origin of species |
| 6) Lazarus | f) Conformity |

2.4 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND OTHER RELATED DISCIPLINES

The goal of social psychology is to identify universal properties of human nature that make everyone – regardless of social class or culture susceptible to social influence. By contrast political science, sociology and economics, cultural anthropology have a starting point in the political, societal and cultural systems in which an individual lives while general psychology studies learning processes, motivation and perception, intelligence, social psychology studies the behaviour of individual in his face-to-face interaction with others, anthropology is concerned with the culture of the group, its technology, its beliefs, values and so on, sociology studies the social institutions and social organisations and social systems and attempts to relate the various aspects of social structure to the patterns of human behaviour and regulate the behaviour of individuals through a set of rules. Thus the knowledge of norms, sanctions and roles in the given society will help the sociologist to explain the uniform patterns of human behaviour. Social psychologist, as against this focuses on how individual perceives the norms, sanctions and roles in the group in which he lives and work. Thus social psychology tries to understand the influences which produces regularities and diversities in human social behaviour. Its interest in the individual as a participant in the social relationships and its emphasis is on the understanding of the social influence process underlying relationships.

2.4.1 Levels of Analysis of Behaviour

Social psychology's focus on social behaviour is shared by several other disciplines in the social sciences including sociology, economics, political science, anthropology, psychology etc. each of these disciplines is concerned with the influence of social and societal factors on human behaviour for example, the effect of recession on the world economy, a typical society with its unique rules and norm, a family which is totally authoritarian, an NGO organisation and its functioning.

In all these examples, the emphasis is on larger social structure like world economy, ethnic group, family, and an NGO and not on individual behaviour. However the important difference between social psychology and the other social sciences is in their level of analysis.

The societal level of analysis is used by sociologists, economists, political scientists, and other social scientists. These scholars attempt to understand general patterns of social behaviour, such as homicide rates, voting behaviour, or consumer spending. According to this viewpoint, social behaviour can be explained by such forces as economic hard times, class conflicts, and clashes between competing ethnic groups, regional crop failures, governmental politics, or technological change. The goal of societal analysis is to identify links between broad social forces and general patterns of social behaviour. To study violence in urban areas, social scientists might identify relationships between rates of violent crime and such factors as poverty, immigration, or the industrialisation of a society.

The individual level of analysis is typically used by clinical and personality psychologists, who explain behaviour in terms of a person's unique life history and psychological characteristics. According to this viewpoint, personality traits

and motives can explain why individuals behave as they do, and why two people may react quite differently to the same situation. Emphasis is given to individual differences in childhood experiences, in ability and motivation, and in personality or psychological adjustment. The individual approach explains violent crime in terms of the unique histories and characteristics of the criminal. To understand such behaviour, the psychologists using the individual approach would consider the personality and background of the person: was the criminal depressed or suffering from paranoid delusions or using drugs? What kind of life had the bank teller led? For example, was he physically abused as a child?

Social psychologists adopt a different level of analysis: The interpersonal level. Social psychologists typically focus on a person's current social situation. That social situation includes the other people in the environment, their attitudes and behaviours, and their relationship to the individual. The same teenage boy who is outgoing and talkative with his close friends may be shy and withdrawn with unfamiliar adults. The same teenage girl who got. As in math in her supportive all-girl high school may be struggle with math in her competitive, largely male college math classes. Change the social context, and the individual will change.

2.4.2 Social Psychology and General Psychology

Social psychology is so intimately related with general psychology that it may be considered as a branch of psychology itself. This fact is also clear from the matter appearing in the chapter relating to the scope of social psychology in the preceding pages. Many subjects of psychology are studied in the field of social psychology. Besides, social psychology takes within its purview some such subjects which do not form a part of general psychology. Therefore, both of these subjects have been separated.

General psychology, in a way, independently carries out the study of human behaviour whereas social psychology aims at knowing as to how far and in what way the behaviour of an individual affects the behaviour of others. For example: assessing the intelligence of an individual is a job of a psychologist but to study the influence of peer group of intelligence becomes a topic of research of social psychologist. One of the aims of the social psychology is to study changes in human behaviour in the changed modern conditions. It is a fact that the development of various qualities, habits, aptitudes and character of an individual takes place in the society. Conditions in a society are ever-changing and these changing conditions are deeply related to an individual's development. In general psychology, too, we try to study various aspects of man's development. In social psychology while studying these aspects of development, our mind goes particularly towards those social influences which directly or indirectly affect them. In this way we find that general psychology and social psychology are inter-linked. Consequently, it is very difficult to keep them apart. However, the field of activity of both subjects is different and therefore, these are studied independently.

2.4.3 Social Psychology and Sociology

In sociology we study groups, society and institutions, whereas in social psychology our attention is centered round the action and reactions of individuals. Individuals and groups are naturally related to society. For example: studying 'family' as a whole and its structure and function is the job of a sociologist but

how family atmosphere influences each child differently becomes the study topic for a social psychologist. As such, relationship between sociology and social psychology is but natural. It is people who form masses and organise society. Many activities of persons take place either in a group or in a society. Therefore, in studying a person's behaviour we have to study those groups, societies or institutions where he shows or had shown his behaviour.

Social customs, religion, marriage and other social traditions develop according to the needs of the people. The sociologist has to take the aid of social psychology in order to find out the necessities that inspire man for creating and organising his various customs and traditions.

2.4.4 Social Psychology and Anthropology

In anthropology we study different organisms and developmental and cultural aspects of human life. Anthropology has two branches – physical and cultural. Social psychology appears to be related with both of them. In the field of physical anthropology differences relating to heredity and race are studied. Study of differences relating to heredity and race becomes a subject of social psychological studies. An anthropologist also takes interest in group behaviour, but his interest remains confined to ancient and aborigine races. A study of a racial or cultural group in its detail to observe continuity of a tradition is a subject matter of anthropologist, but how the culture shapes the cognitive and affective tendency of an individual is a matter of interest to a social psychologist. The anthropologist unlike the social psychologist does not study an individual's behaviour in the cultural or social background. However, it is now seen that sociologists have started taking interest in cultural studies along with the study of some very important persons because of the life story of such important persons which plays a vital role in the building of a particular culture. It will have to be admitted that this kind of study conducted by anthropologists will remain incomplete without the help of social psychology. This shows that anthropology and social psychology are inter-dependent upto some extent.

2.4.5 Social Psychology and Ethics

It is evident from the preceding discussion that social psychology is related in some way or other with all those sciences which analyse and define human behaviour. The same holds true in the case of ethics too. Ethics analyses public behaviour and determines its appropriateness or otherwise. In the background of a man's good or bad behaviour lie some of his drives. The study of these drives is one of the main aims of social psychology. It is thus evident that ethics has close relationship with social psychology. For example: ethical appropriateness or inappropriateness of an individual or group behaviour is a study of ethics, anthropologist or a sociologist, but the main motive behind following an ethical code or reasons for doing or not doing so are a subject of concern to social psychologist.

2.4.6 Social Psychology and Political Science

In political science a detailed analysis is made of the mental attitude of rulers and the ruled. It also undertakes the study of such measures and sources that strengthen the state authority and administration. Side by side theories are also propounded to protect the interests of the ruled. How is the public opinion formed?

What should the leader do in order to build public opinion in his favour? What should be done to inspire and encourage the public? How should the ruler deal with national and international problems? How should he build up organisational? These are some of the issues that come under the purview of political science. To understand the various problems relating to politics, the political scientists have to take the help of social psychology, because it is only through social psychology that political science may succeed in understanding the latest and complex problems and motives of the public. Similarly, social psychology has to lean towards political science for understanding some of its subjects because political science deals with the welfare of masses. Many a studies about leadership, authoritarian personality and group dynamics and group conformity are taken up by social psychologist.

2.4.7 Social Psychology and Economics

Under economics activities relating to earning of money and production are studied. Economics is essentially a subject dealing with money matters, production, consumption and distribution of products and money. In the background of all such matters and activities concerning earning of money lie an individual's natural drives and necessities. As such, economics will certainly need the help of social psychology. An individual's behaviours are motivated due to his monetary considerations. Consequently, economics, too, has to rely on social psychology in understanding certain matters. A very recent example is the economic recession and its impact on different individuals.

2.4.8 Significance of Social Psychology Today

Social psychology is not only related to other social sciences. Since it became an applied field, social psychological concepts of awareness, attitudes, social perceptions, motivational aspects are been used to study – rural problem, organisation problem, health and fertility behaviours and environmental attitudes and so on.

The main utility of social psychology is that through its study we may get enough help in solution of various social problems. Each nation of the world is facing different types of problems. For instance our own India is facing problems of unemployment, caste, communalism, linguism, regionalism, socialism, communism, sectarianism, beggary, prostitution, capitalism, religion, dress, food habits, standard of living, robbery, dacoity, poverty, diseases etc. All these create great difficulties from time to time. Similar problems are found in other countries too. At the root of all these problems are some psychological causes. Social psychology is capable of reaching the roots of these problems and offering some solutions. Therefore, the utility of social psychology for us cannot be dispute. Individuals, institutions, society or the government have equal opportunities to make use of social psychology. In fact, these bodies do take the help of social psychology. Thus, we take the help of social psychology for solving our social problems as and when needed in some form or the other.

Self Assessment Questions 2

Exercise-II

Fill in the blanks

- 1) The level of analysis of sociology field is (Societal / Interpersonal).

- 2) Psychology studies the behaviour at (societal level / individual level).
- 3) Political science studies (political system / political incident).
- 4) Cultural anthropology's interest is (cultural values of a person/cultural system).
- 5) Economics is worried about (world economy / per capita income)
- 6) General psychology concentrates on (learning process / family income).
- 7) Social psychology's subject matter is (individual in a social context / group in a society).
- 8) Ethics analysis of behaviour (appropriateness / causes of appropriate).
- 9) Social psychology studies or on norms values or effect of individual behaviour (norms/values environment).
- 10) Sociology studies (organisations / religious value of an individual).

2.5 LET US SUM UP

This unit started with acknowledging the contributions of early social scientists – social philosophers, evolutionists, anthropologists and sociologists to the field of social psychology.

Then the unit traced the beginning of social psychology field with books published by McDougall and Allport. It then slowly touched upon the landmarks in the historical development of social psychology as a separate discipline like study of crowd behaviour, conformity behaviour and attitude, formation of social norm, racial prejudice, co-operation and common goals and lifestyle and social behaviour, environment concerns etc. Later in the unit, we related and the subject matter of social psychology with other similar disciplines – like sociology, psychology, political science, ethnics, anthropology and economics. It stressed that the difference is mainly because of the level of analysis done by other social sciences which is either societal or individual level on compared to interpersonal level analysis by social psychologist.

2.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Briefly explain the contributions of early theorists to social psychology.
- 2) Enumerate the important landmarks in the historical development of social psychology.
- 3) Explain the differences in the level of analysis used by social psychologists and other social scientists.

- 4) Describe the similarities and differences in bringing out relationship of social psychology and (*any two*) Political science, Sociology, Psychology and Economics

2.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

Baron, R.A and Donn Bryne (2006) *Social Psychology*, Prentice Hall of India (10th Edition), New Delhi.

Crisp, R.J and Rhiannon N.Turner, *Essential Social Psychology*, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

2.8 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Self Assessment Questions 1

(Exercise-I)

a) 3, b) 5, c) 1, d) 6, e) 2, f) 4

Self Assessment Questions 2

(Exercise-II)

- 1) Societal
- 2) Individual level
- 3) Political system
- 4) Cultural system
- 5) World economy
- 6) Learning process
- 7) Individual in a societal context
- 8) Appropriateness
- 9) Norms and values
- 10) Organisations

UNIT 3 SOCIAL AND PERSON PERCEPTION– DEFINITION, DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTIONAL FACTORS

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Social Cognition – Description and Nature
- 3.3 Social Perception – Definition
- 3.4 Mechanisms Social Perception
 - 3.4.1 Understanding Temporary States
 - 3.4.2 Basic Channels Non-verbal Communication
- 3.5 Understanding of the Most Permanent or Lasting Characteristics –
Attributions
 - 3.5.1 Types of Attributions
 - 3.5.2 Theories of Attributions
- 3.6 Impression Formation
- 3.7 Implicit Personality Theory
- 3.8 Person Perception
 - 3.8.1 Mechanisms of Person Perception
- 3.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.10 Unit End Questions
- 3.11 Suggested Readings
- 3.12 Answers to Self Assessment Questions

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Social cognition involves two basic processes of social perception and person perception. The process of social perception helps us in understanding other people and in doing so looks for the causes behind their behaviour. The process starts with using the non-verbal communication channels of body language to understand the person. Next it attempts to understand the cause behind others behaviour by describing the locus of causality or internal or external attribution. The unit further studies the process of impression formation to get a clear understanding of the other's behaviour and touches upon 'implicit personality theory' of preconceived assumptions about people based on our experience.

The unit then describes the second process of social cognition – person perception, which deals with forming impressions of people using clues from their roles in social life, physical cues, their distinct mannerisms forming schemas or mental structures about people, stereotype, scripts. The unit further studies the heuristics a mental short cuts which reduce complex judgement to simple rules of thumb and social categorisation.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After readings through the unit, you will be able to:

- describe social perception and person perception;
- identified different mechanisms behind forming social perception;
- explain the term close to social perception – person perception; and
- analysis the mechanisms of forming person perception.

3.2 SOCIAL COGNITION – DESCRIPTION AND NATURE

Apart from the self, the individual is curious to know about the other people. The phenomenon of how people think about other people is discussed in the social cognition. It is a broad term that describe on the way perceiver encode, process, remember and use information in social contexts in order to make sense of other people’s behaviour. It becomes an essential element in our understanding of inter-group and interpersonal processes.

3.3 SOCIAL PERCEPTION – DEFINITION

“We had one girl in our college, she was very popular among boys but was a subject of jealousy of girls, because boys use to always follow her and she was constantly interacting with them. One day when I asked the other girls ‘what is that this girl has got? The girls unanimously expressed that, she has the knack of talking to boys – the way she looks at them, smiles, her posture, her mannerisms give boys a clue that she is ready for friendship”.

This example brings us to a very important concept in social psychology, *Social Perception*, that is the processes through which we seek to understand other persons. Because other people play such important roles in our life, we engage in this process very often and devote a lot of effort in trying to figure out what makes people tick? Why some people is socially popular and others are not? Sometimes their efforts to impress others work but also we often make errors in our efforts to understand them.

3.4 MECHANISMS OF SOCIAL PERCEPTION

Mechanisms of social perception – people use various techniques, methods, and ways to know about others in order to get superficial or a deeper understanding of them. Mechanisms of social perception include – nonverbal channels of communications, internal and external attributions, impressions and implicit theories about people.

The process of social perception sets the stage for much of social interactions. Our perceptions of the way others feel, their motives and traits play an important role in shaping the nature of our interaction with them. Knowing the other person involves two stages.

Understanding temporary states of others – i.e. their present emotions and feelings.

Understanding the most permanent or lasting characteristics i.e. their motives, intentions or traits.

3.4.1 Understanding Temporary States

Our social behaviour is affected by temporary factors or causes like changing moods, fatigue, illness, and drugs – all these can influence the way in which we think and behave. For example: one of our teacher use to behave in a ‘peculiar way’ and later we realised that it was because she was used to take a strong drug for her illness. Because such temporary factors exert influence on social behaviours and thoughts, we try to find out how others are feeling. How do we go about this process of understanding? If we attempt to ask the people about how they are feeling – we may not get genuine answers and people may look at us in a suspicious manner. So the next best alternative and a less direct method for gathering information about others is to give careful attention their body language and other non-verbal cues, provided by changes in their facial expressions, eye contact, posture, body movement. As noted by Depaulo (1992) such non-verbal behaviour is relatively irresistible or difficult to control, so that even when others try to conceal their inner feelings from us, these non-verbal cues often leak out real feelings in many subtle way especially the people close to the person would understand. The information conveyed by such cues and our efforts to interpret this are often described as ‘non-verbal communication’. The language of facial expressions, eye contact, tone and posture (body language).

3.4.2 Basic Channels of Non-verbal Communication

All of us are aware that we act differently when we are happy or when we are sad. People tend to behave differently when experiencing different emotional states. Let us understand how precisely our inner states show up in our behaviour. This brings us to the basic channels through which such communications take place and there are five basic channels:

- i) facial expressions,
 - ii) eye contact,
 - iii) body language,
 - iv) body movements, and
 - v) touching and proximics.
- i) *Facial expressions:* More than two thousand years ago, the Roman Orator Cicero stated “The face is the image of the soul” by this he meant that human feelings and emotions are often reflected in the face and modern research asserts these findings. But are these facial expressions universal? Early research suggest that facial expressions are universal (Ekman and Friesen 1975) but the result of more recent study, (Russell 1994, Carroll 1996) indicate that although facial expressions are indeed universal, our judgements of these emotions may also be affected by the context and various situational cues.
 - ii) *Eye contact:* As in the case of face, it is also said that “our eyes are windows of soul”. If some one is talking to you and is staring at you constantly, you will feel uncomfortable. Also when some one does not maintain ‘eye contact’, you may feel that the person is hiding something. Similarly, have you ever

had a conversation with someone wearing very dark glasses, if so, you may be in an uncomfortable position and would wonder ‘what the other person is hiding from you’?

Human eyes are indeed a very powerful ‘cue’ in reflecting our feelings and we do often learn much about others feelings from their eyes. While a high level of eye contact with others is usually interpreted as a sign of liking or positive feelings, a stare is often interpreted as a sign of anger or hostility and many people find this non-verbal cues very disturbing.

- iii) *Body language (Gestures, postures and movement)*: Our emotions are always accompanied by physiological arousal and changes. Every emotion has a relatively same set of physiological reactions which have come to us by evolution.

For example: when you are angry, your face becomes red, your fists are drawn together and you are ready to attack.

When you are afraid, your legs start shivering but you are ready to run or faint.

When you are sad, your face becomes pale, and you have a drained down feelings

These postures, gestures and body movements together are termed as body language. Body language often reveals other’s emotional states. Do you have a pet (cat or dog)? if yes, when happy, how does a pet behaves - rubbing, its body, sitting close to you, licking you, clearly indicating its happiness. Straight body position is usually taken to indicate ‘rigidity’, whereas a ‘leaning forward’ body position indicates ‘warmness’ and ‘interest in the other person’. Related finding indicate that large scale body movements or postures can sometimes provide important information about others emotions and even about their apparent traits.

- iv) *Body movement*: More specific information is also provided by gestures. Gestures fall into several categories; the most important are emblems – body movements carrying specific meaning in a given culture. These movements have clear and definite meaning in one culture but in other culture it may not have any meaning. People have to be careful with their gestures while traveling in different cultures as you might offend others without meaning to do so.
- v) *Touching and Proximics*: A lot depends on the meaning you assign to the nature of this physical contact and the context in which it occurs. Existing evidence indicates that when touching is considered appropriate, it often produces positive reactions in the person being touched. One acceptable way in which people in many different cultures touch strangers is through handshake. Many books on etiquette suggest that handshake reveal much about other. Person’s personality traits – assertiveness, humbleness, submissiveness etc.

A practical applicability of these non-verbal cues is recognising deception or lie detection. When people lie, subtle changes often occur in their facial expressions, body posture or movements and certain non-verbal aspects of speech.

Non-verbal cues of deception

- Micro expressions – fleeting facial expressions
- Interchannel discrepancy – inconsistencies between non –
 - verbal cues from different basic
 - channels. Example: eyes telling
 - something facial expressions
 - pleasant
- Non-verbal aspect of speech – Pitch of voice raises
- Speak in a more hesitating manner
- Eye contact – Blinking is more
- Pupils are more dilated
- Low or unusually high eye
- Contact
- Facial expression – exaggerated facial expressions (more smile, broad smile).

Further to check whether lies be detected across cultures? The study by Bond and Atoum (2000) clearly showed that participants were accurate in recognising lies by persons in their own culture than by persons from another culture.

3.5 UNDERSTANDING OF THE MOST PERMANENT OR LASTING CHARACTERISTICS – ATTRIBUTIONS

Humans are rational creatures and always behave in a balanced and coherent and analytic way. This highly influential view was presented by Heider (1958) who said that people are motivated by two primary .

The need to form a coherent view of the world and the need to gain control over the environment. Heider believed that this desire for consistency, stability and the ability to predict and control make us. Naïve scientists. In particular this need to attribute causes to effects. (observed behaviours and event) and to create a meaningful, stable world, where things make sense was the basis for a theoretical approach which become highly influential in how social psychologist viewed social cognition. This was referred as the attribution theory.

Heider believed that a ‘basic need to attribute’ make the world a clear, definable and predictable place, thereby reducing uncertainty.

3.5.1 Types of Attributions

Attributing causality has generated a great deal of work that attempted to model the way in which humans try to explain the actions of themselves and others. This brings us to the ‘Locus of causality’. The main distinction can be made between Internal-External attributions. The internal attribution locates the cause of behaviour to the personal characteristics of the person such as personality, mood, ability, attitudes and effort; it is also known as personal attribution. On

the contrary the external attribution locates the cause to the external events such as actions of others, nature of situation, social pressure or luck. It is also known as situation attribution. A simple example can help us to understand this attribution of causality.

A child fails in an examination if he attributes the cause for his failure to his effort then he is showing internal causality but if he attributes the cause for his failure to his luck, then he is showing external causality.

3.5.2 Theories of Attributions

Attribution is complex process and so many theories have been proposed to explain its operations. Two such views have been extremely influential

1) Theory of correspondence inference, and 2) co-variation model.

The correspondence inference

Jones and Davis's (1965) correspondence inference theory focuses on how we use information about other's behaviour as a basis for inferring that they possess various traits. Other's behaviour provides us with a rich source of information on which to draw.

Very often, it is observed that individuals act in certain ways not because doing so is consistent with their own traits or they want to behave in that way (their choice) but because external factors (external cause) leave them little choice. In such cases, drawing inferences can be misleading.

Two kinds of effects can be observed, when 'many' individuals act in a certain way, this is called common effect, which is usually caused by external events and involves high social desirability. There are situations when an individual behaves in a unique fashion, even though others may not and the act may be socially undesirable. These are the non-common effects. According to Jones and Davis, these non-common effects help one to infer about other's traits.

According to Jones and Davis (1965) we assess whether there is a correspondence between behaviour and personality (i.e. arrive at a correspondent inference or, in other words, a dispositional attribution) by processing three key types of information: social desirability, choice, and non-common effects.

Social desirability information refers to whether the behaviour observed is consistent with or counters to, social norms. An internal, dispositional attribution is more likely when socially to adhere to the majority viewpoint – because they wish to avoid exclusion and ridicule for standing out and being different from the crowd. As such, behaviour that is socially desirable does not tell us much about people's personalities because they may simply be going along with the group norm, which may or may not coincide with their own personal point of view. In contrast, someone who exhibits socially undesirable behaviour – who goes against the social norm – is much more likely to be displaying behaviour that corresponds to an underlying personality trait, because the behaviour cannot be attributed to the person simply conformity to the majority.

According to Jones and Davis, another type of information that social perceivers seek in order to make a correspondent inference is whether the behaviour in question was freely chosen or not. An internal, dispositional attribution is more

likely when the person being observed has freely chosen the given behaviour. Again, this makes a lot of sense; if behaviour has been freely chosen then it is much more likely to be the result of an underlying personality characteristic or attitude, rather than a result of coercion, threat, or inducements.

When a behaviour has a unique consequence, rather than having a range of possible other consequences, we can refer to it as having non-common effects. An internal, dispositional attribution is more likely when the outcome of a behaviour has a unique (or non common) effect. For instance, a punch has really only one possible outcome so it is more likely to be attributed to an internal, dispositional cause.

The co-variation model

Kelley's (1967) co-variation model accounts for multiple behaviours. Importantly, it also details the processes that result in external as well as internal attributions. According to Kelley, causality is attributed using the co-variation principle. This principle states that for something to be the cause of a particular behaviour it must be present when the behaviour is present and absent when the behaviour is absent (i.e. it must co-vary). From multiple potential causes we ascribe causality to the one that co-varies with the behaviour to the greatest extent – acting, as Heider (1958) would say, exactly like native scientists.

The co-variation model states that three types of information are crucial for arriving at an internal or external attribution; (i) consensus (ii) consistency and (iii) distinctiveness information. When observing someone's behaviour in a particular social context, the combined impact of these three types of information will determine what type of attribution is made. Consensus information is the extent to which other people in the scene react in the same way as the target person. Consistency information is the extent to which the target person reacts in the same way on different occasions. Distinctiveness information is the extent to which the target person reacts in the same way in other social contexts.

Here's an example to illustrate. Imagine you are sitting in the class one day and your professor walks in wearing an unusual multi-coloured sweater, sporting on its front a picture of a large happy badger. As native scientists we like to have a stable and predictable world, so you would be compelled to try to figure out why your professor has chosen to wear such a strange garment. According to the co-variation model, you would assess whether the three types of information outlined above are present or absent.

First: consensus. Is everyone wearing the same type of sweater or is it only your professor? If it is only your professor then you're likely to begin to make an internal, dispositional attribution: no-one else is behaving in the same way (i.e. wearing a strange sweater), so the cause of this strange behaviour is likely to be something uniquely to do with your professor, and not the situation (otherwise other people would also be affected by whatever the cause might be – such as a new fashion – and would also be wearing a badger sweater).

Second: consistency. Is this the first time your professor has worn this sweater, or does he do it every week? If he wears this weird sweater every week, then you're going to be even more inclined to make a dispositional attribution. If he is only wearing it this week then you might think he's having only a temporary

fashion crisis – perhaps his washing machine has broken (a situational attribution) and the peculiar sweater is the only one he has left that is clean.

Third: distinctiveness: Does your professor wear this sweater in different classes? Do you see him around campus sporting similarly ill-advised sweaters? If you do, again you're going to be more inclined to make a dispositional attribution (i.e. your professor has chronic fashion problems, or perhaps an enduring badger fixation). This is because the behaviour is not distinctive to the current situation (which would make it likely that it is something in the immediate context that is making your professor wear the sweater).

In sum, if your professor wears bad badger sweaters consistently over time and in different contexts, and he is the only person to be doing so, then you are going to make a dispositional attribution and conclude that he has terrible fashion sense (or a badger fixation). So Dispositional attribution: Any explanation that locates the cause as being internal to the person (personality, mood, attitudes, abilities, effort). Situational attribution: Any explanation that locates the cause as being external to the person (actions of others, the nature of the situation, luck).

3.6 IMPRESSION FORMATION

The moment we look at a stranger, the process of impression formation starts, although we are not aware of such a process, we end up either forming positive or negative impression about others. We look at a person and immediately a certain impression of his character forms itself before us. A glance, a few spoken words are sufficient to start a story about that person. As we have already seen, some aspects of social perception, such as nonverbal communication, attribution which requires a lot of hard work and it is not always easy to draw inferences about other's motives or traits from their behaviour. In contrast, forming first impressions seems to be relatively effortless.

- a) How do we form unified impressions of others in the quick and seeing effortless way that we offer do?

Asch applied these ideas to understand impression formation process suggesting that we do not form impressions simply by adding together all the traits we observe in other persons. Rather we perceive these traits in relation to one another so that the traits cease to exist individually and become a part of an integrated dynamic whole.

On the basis of many studies, Asch concluded that, forming impressions about others involve more than simply adding together individual traits – but the two or more traits entering into a particular relationship. His research exerted a lasting impact on the field.

The impression formation process has been explained by understanding

- i) Role of central traits.
- ii) The issue of adding versus averaging information.
- iii) The primacy or recency of information.
- iv) Central traits – when impressions are being formed of another person some pieces of information carry greater weight than others and are able to modify the whole picture. Asch called such influential

characteristic as central traits and showed that 'warm' or 'cold' dimension was a central one that could strongly affect the organisation of people's impression. Extending Asch's study, Kelley (1950) introduced a guest lecturer to several university classes. Some of the students were told in advance that this lecturer was among other characteristics, a rather 'warm' person and to others that he was 'cold' person. The lecturer gave an identical talk to each group and when each of class member was asked about their impressions, each group formed the impression as per earlier instructions that were consistent with their initial description of 'warm' or cold.

b) Adding Versus Averaging Methods:

Many a times, we are given a list of personality traits that describe a person. For example when describing a person, some one might say that he / she is open minded, clever and modest, but is quiet. What sort of impression do we form of this person? Social psychologists have developed two basic models to explain how this kind of information is combined. The additive model and the averaging model. Both the additive and the averaging models begin by assuming that traits can be sealed in their likeability. Some traits convey very favourable information about a person, while others indicate negative information.

The averaging model claims that we use the mean value of the traits provided to form our impression of a person. For example instance in the earlier example where we said a person is open minded, clever, modest but quiet, if we said only open minded and clever the person would have a more favourable impression, because both these traits are very desirable and have values. But inclusion of the traits modest or quiet would reduce the average as they are less active traits and have low values.

The additive or summation model in contrast, predicts that one's judgement is based on the sum of the traits values rather than on the average. Therefore the majority of evidence is supportive of averaging model. Anderson (1968) has given a weighted average model, over the simple average model discussed earlier: He says that the weighted average model predicts impressions on the basis of an average of scores that have been given weightage according to their importance. This more complicating version of average models gives a better account for our integrating information of other people.

c) Primacy and recency effects:

As said earlier we want to make the best possible impression on others at our first meeting some new relatives. Now the question is which information is more influential the first information in another person's perception of us (primacy effect) or the latest information (recency effect). It was found first impressions are lasting? i.e. primacy effect apparently very important in determining our final impressions of other's. However under certain conditions recency effects also occur, i.e. some additional activity intervenes and influences the more recent information. According to this model, adding values traits 'modest' and 'quiet' to the value of clever and open minded would increase the favorability of the overall evaluation for example: if two persons are given scores on some traits as follows:

| Person-I | Person-II |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Understand (+3) | Understanding (+3) |
| Poised (+2) | Sharp willed (+2) |
| Confident (+1) | Congenial (+2) |
| | Resourceful (+2) |
| Total= +6 | Loud mouth (-3) Total = +6 |

Now when we take additive model the sum value for each person would be +6, therefore according to this model the sum value being +6 for both, the overall impression of the two persons would be equally favourable. But when we take the averaging model we get a mean value for each differently i.e. $+6/3=+3$ for person I and $+6/5=11/5$ for person II. Therefore the averaging model would predict that overall evaluation of person I would be better than that of person II will have a stronger effect. For example you met a person at a party last month and formed a negative impression but then encountered her again this week and reached positively, your impression is more likely to be positive than negative. Therefore if one is instructed to combine all information about a person, the recency effect may be eliminated and only the primacy effect would prevail.

Organising Impressions: Categories and Principles

In forming information of other people it is not just the external characteristics or the traits which influence us. Rather we have certain preconceived assumptions about people based on our experiences. At the general level we may have some over siding philosophers of human nature-expectation that people will possess certain qualities and behave in certain ways. At more specific levels we have particular ways of categorising people and events. For example: stereotyping , this is one way of organising our thoughts about certain group of people. To describe these categories of impression social psychologists have started using the words prototype and schemas. We shall now consider some of these categories and principles that effect our interpretation of people and events around us.

3.7 IMPLICIT PERSONALITY THEORY

This is a set of unstated assumption about what traits are associated with one another, which are developed on our own, through development and experience. Since, these theories are rarely stated in formal terms, they are considered implicit. But all the same they dominate our judgment of other people. Such theories may be true or false as judged against the actual occurrence of them in real life. For example we assume that being good at studies would fetch us a good position in the society. This may be true or may be false. In fact the most important feature which distinguishes implicit personality theory from more formal psychological theories is their likely hood of being tested and founded incorrect because we form an association between two aspects and we don't notice the rule. For example having higher education and gaining a good position in the society. Not all highly educated individuals have high position in the society. If we see our politicians, most of them don't even have secondary education. But we make assumption all the same.

The use of such implicit theories shows that we have a need to simplify and integrate information. So that we can deal more easily with the complexities of

human interactions. Even with limited information about a person, we tend to fill in the detail, and make a person more understandable in terms of our own experiences and we invariably develop a rationale for the theory that we have formed.

Another approach to understand people's implicit personality theories is represented in the works of Kelly: he developed the cognitive theory of human behaviour wherein he was concerned with the links between our perception and our behaviour. A most important link in this chain is our interpretation of the events and stimuli in our world.

Self Assessment Questions 1

Exercise-I

- i) Below are given day to day examples, examine each example carefully and choose the appropriate mechanisms of social and person perception:

A mother asks the child little sternly 'did you take money from my purse'. Child answers it as 'no', but he is not looking at her directly. It is an example of which non-verbal communication channel.

In one incident, an Indian man was arrested in Dubai, because this person was found with another woman in her bedroom sitting next to her. This is an example of what nonverbal communication channel.

- ii) In the following example find out the internal and external locus of causality

- a) A child comes homes and informs the mother that he got less marks but he also says that his friend got the highest marks in that paper. What will the mother of the child would say

You have got marks as per your effort or studies

The mother says – my child got less marks because the teacher is partial and she does not like my child.

- b) In a exams, all students copy except one child who does not
This is a effect.

3.8 PERSON PERCEPTION

Person perception is a process of forming impressions of people. Let us understand how do we go about it? What kind of information we use, how accurate it is and what bias affect our impression.

3.8.1 Mechanisms of Person Perception

Mechanisms of person perception – includes ways of impressions about the other person, for this people use whatever obvious physical cues, their behaviour role which are available to them. Also they further develop mental shortcuts by forming schemas and heuristics and further go and categorise them according to some rules of thumb.

A glance at someone's picture or at an individual passing by on the street gives us an idea about what kind of person s/he is. In fact when two people meet, if only for a moment, they start forming impressions of each other. With more

contact they form fuller and richer information of that person. In forming impressions of other person, we depend on the following to help us form impression about a person.

i) Roles/traits

ii) Physical cues and

iii) Saliency

i) *Roles/traits*: If roles are informative, rich and well articulated, it can help in summarising a lot of information across a wide range of situations. Roles are more distinctive than traits. Moreover role schemas are more useful than traits for recall ex: try to recall the names of all the people you met in a seminar and next try to recall rude and stubborn people you met, which task is easier, I am sure it is the first task, because people tend to think of others within a 'role context' first and only then according to their personality traits.

ii) *Physical cues*: The other person's physical appearance and behaviours are usually taken together to form an impression about that person.

The observation that a person is wearing traditional clothes help us infer that the person might be from rural background. We even infer personality traits from person's behaviour – A person who is helping others is inferred as kind, or a chubby faced person is thought to be warm etc.

iii) *Saliency*: People's attention is drawn to those aspects or characteristics of the persons which stand out. This is termed as 'figure ground' principle. A more outstanding feature or salient feature like fair skinned, handicapped, high pitched voice etc., is used to form the overall impression about the person as a total person.

Salient behaviours draw more attention than do less obvious ones. It also influences perception of causality. But a disadvantage here is that saliency also can produce 'extreme evaluative judgement'.

We do not stop at just forming impressions from observable information such as appearance, behaviour, but we move on to quickly form inferences about personality traits about the person from this information. Referring to trait is more economical and general way of describing a person than is referring to behaviour – if someone asked you about what your room mate is like – instead of describing about each and every behaviour of his in detail, it is easier to say that 'he is cool' or 'he is good natured'. This process of inferring also occurs spontaneously, even automatically. These traits can act as bases for predicting future behaviour.

Schemas

Social cognition is the process in which people think about themselves and the social world – how they select, interpret, remember and use social information to make judgments and decisions.

How people think about the social world's people rely on a variety of mental shortcuts that serve them well. They use quite practical, adopt different procedures and rules according to their goals and needs in that situation.

Like a scientists, all of us, in our everyday lives, develop theories that help us understand ourselves and the social world. These theories called Schemas are mental structures people use to organise their knowledge around themes or topics or subject.

A schema is a way of representing the memory process. In other words, people do not respond to what they see, rather they interpret it on the basis of previous experience that is represented in memory as a schema.

Self schema is defined as a generalisation about the self based on experience we use to interpret events related to the self. Similarly we have schemata about other people too.

The general form of schema can be defined as an organised configuration of knowledge, derived from past experience that is used to interpret our experience.

We have schemas about many things – other people, ourselves, social roles and specific events. Schemas effect what information we notice, think about and remember.

Schemas are often resistant to change – they show a strong perseverance effect, remaining unchanged even in the face of contradictory information. Perhaps even worse schemas can sometime be self fulfilling.

People have role schema – these represent the organised abstract concepts we have of people in a particular role, such as cowboy, professor, devoted lover.

Other schemas focus on groups. The most familiar is the group stereotype – it is belief about typical characteristics of members of a group or social category, and which attributes specific traits to a particular group of people. Example: certain communities are assumed to be stingy (money wise), absent minded or aggressive etc.

Prototype – is an abstract ideal of the schema – for example may be about his body type, mannerisms etc. we assume leaders to be busy – so a well composed and relaxed leader goes contrary to our schema.

Schemas about extremely common events are usually called scripts. A script is a standard sequence of behaviour over a period of time. The essence of a script is in its boundedness in time, its causal flow and its being simple, coherent, perceptual unit – ex: a wedding in a community goes through a series of rituals connected to each other and follow a pattern many schemas contain. Ex: a category that embodies the significant attribute or ideal of the category – for example in India the name of Sachin Tendulkar is an exemplar of the category ‘cricket’.

Function or schematic processing

Advantages

Schemas and information processing – schemas help us process an enormous amount of information swiftly and economically.

Schemas aid recall – memory often works best when we have a schema representation of past event or people.

Schema speed up processing – it is easier to process information relevant to the schema.

Schemas aid automatic inference – schematic processing can occur almost automatically, without any conscious effort. When meeting a friendly person, you may automatically attribute to him other characteristics associated with friendliness – kindness wart.

Schema aid information – schema can help us fill in missing information where there are gaps in our knowledge.

Schemas aid interpretation – schemas help you interpret ambiguous situation.

A person having no knowledge about ‘mumps’ would have no confusion about other inferences about ‘mumps’ schemas allow confident inferences about matters that would otherwise not be clear.

Schemas provide expectations – schemas contain expectations about what should happen expected match lead to unpleasantness.

Schemas contain affect – use of a particular schema can produce an emotional response called ‘schema-drives-affect’ - for example schema for politician. This schema can have ‘affective response’ attached to it. Some of us feel positively about politician and think of them as helpful law makers, but others may feel negatively thinking of them as power hungry and corrupt.

Heuristics

Although we think all human beings are rational, logical and do cognitive effort to analyse our social worlds, Fiske and Taylor argued that we are quite the opposite i.e. we are cognitive misers. As cognitive misers we are reluctant to expand our cognitive resources and we look for any opportunity to avoid engaging in the effortful thoughts. According to Fiske and Taylor, our mental processing resources are highly valued, so we engage in numerous ways to save time and effort when trying to understand the social world.

People save time and effort in making judgments by using heuristics. Heuristics are time saving mental shortcuts that reduce complex judgment to simple rules of thumb. They are quick and easy but can result in biased information processing (Ajzen,1996) they have been used instead of more time consuming, but more accurate, strategies. The most commonly used types of heuristics are – representatives and availability.

Representatives Heuristics – it is a tendency to allocate a set of attributes to some one if they match the prototype of a given category. It is again quick and easy way of putting people into categories.

The important draw back in such categorisation is the base rate fallacy which is the tendency to ignore statistical information (base rates) in favor of representative ness information.

For example: Even when you have the data that ‘gender is uncorrected with managerial and administrative roles in some organisations, there would be more likelihood of attributing more managerial roles to men than women, because such roles are more representative of men than women.

The availability Heuristic: it is the tendency to judge the frequency or probability of an event in terms of how easy it is to think of examples of that event. It is related to the concept of accessibility, which is the extent to which a concept is readily brought to mind.

For example: you might feel more anxiety about taking a flight if you have just heard about a horrific plane crash.

This heuristic mechanism also gives rise to a bias called the false consensus effect (Gross & Miller, 1997). This is the tendency to exaggerate how common one's own opinions are in the general population.

The anchoring heuristics – It is often the case that a distinction is made between the availability heuristic and another called anchoring heuristics. Anchoring is the tendency to be biased towards the starting value (or anchor) in making quantitative judgement. It appears that our judgements on a range of issues are significantly influenced by the point at which we start our deliberations ex: a harsh verdict become subsequently harsher in their final decision than participants asked.

It is clear that we use heuristics routinely and consistently. In our daily life very often we do not have time to think about every issue as important and self relevant and have all the information not that often. Heuristic thought is used a great deal in social perception.

A unique heuristics that has received considerable attention from social psychologists because it helps in understanding how people, think, feel and behave. It is a heuristic that defines attitudes and social behaviour – social categorisation.

Construct

Construct is a key term for Kelly which is the way of interpreting the world and serves as a guide to behaviour. Human beings have a tendency to choose constructs that will make the world understandable and predictable. Kelly says that people do not strive for reinforcement or try to avoid anxiety. They only try to validate their own construct system. He further suggests that conditions have meanings only if they are constructed by the individual.

Social categorisation

Categorisation is the process of understanding what something is by knowing what other things it is equivalent to and what other things it is different from. It is a way of classifying some collection of objects, events, opinions, attitudes, concepts or people.

Categories are defined by prototype in dealing with social categories we can refer to prototype as stereotype. How are they forming? Mostly based on social learning, experience and existing negative. Stereotypes or shared distinctiveness.

Categories can be heterogeneous (made up of many different sorts of people) or homogeneous (made up of only few people who are similar to each other).

Consequences of categorisation – categorisation typically leads to heightened accessibility of stereotype consistent information. They do not only apply to

relatively neutral categories like librarian or waitress but seen to be also related to racial categories. These positive vs negative stereotypes associated with different groups are therefore highly divisive and can contribute to continuing problems of racial prejudice and discrimination.

Another important fact of Kelly's is that every construct we use helps us to classify the similarities and differences between people, objects and events. Each one of us develop only a limited number of constructs and arrange them in order of importance. One person's construct need not be identical with another person's, though they may be similar. He believes that to the extent that the constructs are similar. People's behaviour will be similar as well. For example: the belief system of a family. The member of the family will behave similar if they have a strong belief system.

Self Assessment Questions 2

Exercise-II

- 1) There is a mischievous child Anand, who play tricks on other. The teacher get a news that one child was held by the principal for doing serious mischief and the teacher suspects the child to be Anand. This is because of If I assume that people who wear power glasses are very intelligent. What kind of schema is that?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 2) Give the examples of exemplar for the following events

Boxing
Athletic
Beautiful model Ms. India
Good actor
Dancer

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have understood the different ways in which we try to understand other people –who are close to us or when we come across in our day to day interactions. We employ two processes to know, understand and interpreted others behaviour – social perception and person perception. This unit specifically deals with structure and functions of these processes.

In social perception, we seek to understand and then try to analyse the ‘cause’ behind others behaviour. Here we concentrate on nonverbal communication and impression formation processes. Then we form theories of attributions and implicit theories in understanding the causes behind the person’s behaviour. Similarly under person perception, we explore the various cues which we gather from other persons behaviour, as well as use cognitive short cuts which we use in the form of schemas heuristics and social categorisations to justify our ‘true’ understanding of others behaviour.

3.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Define what social perception is and describe the mechanisms of social perceptions describing in detail any two.
- 2) What is person perception? Describe the different ways of forming person perception.
- 3) “Non-verbal communication channels are the most reliable source of understanding others” – describe its role in social and person perception.

3.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

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3.12 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Self Assessment Questions 1 (Exercise-I)

- i) Eye contact and Proxemics in cultural settings
- ii) a is Internal attribution b is External attribution and Non-common trait.

Self Assessment Questions 2 (Exercise-II)

- 1) Salience and Stereotype
- 2) Examples
Khali, Dara Singh
P.T. Usha
Aishwarya Rai
Amitabh Bachan
Sonal Mansingh

UNIT 4 COGNITIVE BASIS AND DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL PERCEPTION AND PERSON PERCEPTION

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Cognitive and Motivational Basis of Social and Person Perception
 - 4.2.1 Impression Formation and Management
 - 4.2.2 Impression Management
 - 4.2.3 Theories of Self Presentation
 - 4.2.4 Self Presentation Tactics
 - 4.2.5 Individual Differences in Self Presentation
- 4.3 Bias in Attribution
- 4.4 Schemas
- 4.5 Role of Emotions, Motivation in Information Processing
- 4.6 Motivated Person Perception
- 4.7 Effect of Cognitive and Emotional States
 - 4.7.1 Emotion, Mood and Social Influence
 - 4.7.2 Automatic Evaluation
 - 4.7.3 Motivation and Inferences
 - 4.7.4 Suppressing Thoughts and Emotions
- 4.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.9 Unit End Questions
- 4.10 Suggested Readings and References
- 4.11 Answers to Self Assessment Questions

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit we have studied social cognition – a process of knowing, understanding and predicting the behaviour of others. Social cognition involves two basic processes i.e. social perception and person perception. Under social perception, we had studied various mechanisms of social perception – non-verbal communications, attributions, impression formation, and implicit personality theory. In person perception, the mechanisms we studied were physical cues, schemas, heuristics, construct and social categorisation. Here we concentrated on the structural and functional aspects of social and person perception.

In this unit we will move ahead continuing our description from the unit 3. But here we are going to explore the cognitive and dynamics of these processes and would be studying the most pertinent question – to what extent our social perceptions and person perceptions are accurate? Do these processes have errors, bias and misinterpretation which affect our real understanding of social world? In layman’s language, can we trust the information which we have gathered from impression formation, attributions and social categorisation? If not what do we about it.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the cognitive basis of social and person perception;
- identify the different bias and errors involved in social and person perception;
- analyse the dynamics of social and person perception;
- explain how emotional states and motives affect the social and person perception; and
- identify the practical applications of social and person perception.

4.2 COGNITIVE AND MOTIVATIONAL BASIS OF SOCIAL AND PERSON PERCEPTION

The cognitive basis of social and person perception involves the processes through which we collect the information, process and select it and later interpret this information. But what is more important in this information processing is the role played by our emotions, motives in distorting this information so as to suit our needs, goals and aspirations. So the truthfulness and accuracy of the information collected about others gets distorted. The information turns out the way in which it protects one's self esteem, leading to various bias in our attribution process, in our managing impression's and influencing the self presentation tactics. Most importantly our basic emotional states, motives, our goal of accurate information gathering shadows our social and person perception.

We will now deal with the various biases in attributions, impression formation, categorisations which are result of these cognitive and dynamic factors.

4.2.1 Impression Formation and Management

In forming impression about others, there are six simple and general principles:

- People form impressions of others quickly and on the basis of minimal information and go on to infer about general traits about them.
- People pay attention to most salient features of a person we notice the qualities that make a person distinctive or unusual, rather than to everything.
- In processing information about people involves some coherent meaning in their behaviour and use context of a persons behaviour to infer its meaning, rather than interpret the behaviour in isolation.
- We organise our perceptions by categorising or grouping stimuli i.e. rather than to see each person as a separate individual, we tend to see people as members of a group – for example: people wearing white coat are doctors.
- We use cognitive structure to make sense of people's behaviour. If we come across woman doctor, we use our information about doctor more generally to infer her attributes and meaning of her behaviour.
- A perceivers own needs and personal goals influences how he or she perceives others.

Why are our impressions of others sometimes wrong?

Our impressions are sometimes wrong because of the mental shortcuts. We use when forming social judgment people are too ready to attribute other's actions to their personalities rather than to the situation.

Another reason our impression can go wrong concerns our use of schemas. People use implicit personality theories to fill in the gaps in their knowledge about other people and use schemas or theories to decide why other people what they do.

Why does it seem like our impression are accurate?

Why does it seem like our impressions are accurate when as we have seen that 'our impressions can go wrong'. These are three reasons:

First – we often see people in a limited number of situations and thus never have the opportunity to see that our impressions are wrong.

Second - we will not realise that our impressions are wrong if we make them come true, this is the case with self-fulfilling prophecies even if an initial impression is incorrect, we often make it come true.

Third – we might not realise we are wrong if a lot of people agree on what someone's is like – even when everyone is wrong.

4.2.2 Impression Management (Impression Management - The Fine Art of Looking Good)

The desire to make a favorable impression on others is a strong one so most of us do our best to look good to others when we meet them for the first time. Social psychologists use the term impression management (or self-presentation) to describe these effort to make a good impression on others and the results of their research on such efforts suggest that they are worthwhile.

The different techniques for boosting their image fall into two categories: self enhancement – effort to increase their appeal to others and other enhancement – effort to make the target person feel good in various ways.

With respect to self-enhancement, the strategies include effort to boost one's physical appearance through style of dress, personal grooming and the use of various props. (example: eye glasses). Additional tactics of self enhancement involves efforts to describe oneself in positive terms.

Turning to other enhancement, individuals use many different tactics to induce positive moods and reaction in others example: flattery.

According to William James observation, people often shows different sides of themselves to different groups of people. Youngsters who are demure and obedient before their parents and teachers and may swear and swagger in the company of their friends. Most parents do not show their actual self to their children as they do to their colleagues or intimate friends.

We usually talk as if there is a single self which is stable and well defined. But social psychologists believe it is more appropriate to think of self as multiple selves because people display different aspects of themselves in different

situations. Schlenker (1980) has termed this as ‘impression management’ and defined it as the conscious or unconscious attempt to control images that are projected in real or imagined social interactions. When there images deal with some aspects of self we call the process as self presentation.

4.2.3 Theories of Self Presentation

Cooley (1902/1922) and Mead (1934) have put forth a theory known as:

A symbolic interactionism: They have stressed that participants in social interactions try to take the role of the others and see themselves as others see them. This process helps them to know how they appear to others and also guide their social behaviour so that it has the desired effect. By taking the role of others, a person can choose the right clothes and the right speech patterns to communicate with others. For example: politicians, and leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi would wear the traditional dresses of the places which they visited and also spoke few words of local language.

Theory of self presentation: Erving Goffman has drawn parallels of this behaviour to the world of theater and formulated a theory of ‘self presentation in everyday life’. Goffman (1959/1967) has described social interaction as a theoretical performance in which each individual acts out “live” – a set of carefully chosen verbal and non-verbal acts that expresses one’s self. In self presentation, one of the fundamental rules of social interaction is mutual commitment i.e. all the members of the interaction use certain face-saving devices, so as to maintain a face. Through maintaining face is not the goal of the social interaction it is rather necessary for social interaction to continue. Incidents that threaten the face of participant also threaten the survival of the relationship. Therefore we somehow try to avert the embarrassment that might occur and threaten the relationship by overlooking by helping others apologise for the social blindness that they commit. Thus for Goffman social interaction requires its participants to be able to regulate their self presentation and that it will be perceived and evaluated appropriately by others.

Situated identities theory: C.N.Alexander has put forth another theory called the ‘situated identities’ theory. There is a pattern of social behaviour for each social setting and Alexander claimed that people strive to create the most favourable situated identities for themselves in their social encounters. For example a college professor might aim for a highly academic identity when presenting a paper at a seminar, a somewhat more relaxed identity during lectures and a causal and informal situated identities at a social gathering and with friends. This is simply a role a person is performing in different situations. However a situated identity is tied much more to a specific situational context than a role is. Where role focuses on behaviours that are expected, situated identities deal more with the images one choose to project in a particular social interaction.

Each of the three theories of self presentation agrees that other people are forming impressions of us and are using these impressions to guide their interactions with us. Further each theory also points to variety of tactics that individuals use to manage and control the image they present to other.

There are number of reasons why the self presentation occurs:

One is to gain social approval: finding it pleasant to be liked by others. If you make a favourable person impression on another you may gain many benefits from that person. It serves as a means to other goals.

Impression management of self representation may also allow a sense of control in a situation. Thus combination of reasons serves as powerful motivation for the use of self presentation tactics.

4.2.4 Self Presentation Tactics

There are a variety of tactics that people use in presenting themselves to others Jones and Pittman (1982) have identified five major tactics of self representation which differ according to the particular attribute the person is trying to gain. They are:

- i) **Ingratiation:** This is the most common of presentation techniques and is defined as a class of strategic behaviour illicitly designed to influence a particular other person concerning the attractiveness of one's personal qualities. In other words, the main goal of the ingratiator is to be seen to be likeable.

There are number of ways in accomplishing this and one of the most common tactics is to give compliment to another person. However a successful ingratiation knows when to compliment people and also has certain amount of credibility and sincerity. He uses his discrimination properly.

Another tactics is to confirm to other person's opinions and behaviours. We tend to like people whose beliefs, attitudes and behaviours are similar to our own. But, there is a danger here, i.e. if the other person (target) suspects ingratiation this factor does not work.

- ii) **Intimidation:** Is to arouse fear in other people. This is in contrast to ingratiation. In intimidation by creating the image of dangerous person, the intimidator seeks to control and interaction by the exercise of power. Intimidation is mostly used in relationships that are non voluntary in which escape is not easily accomplished. Example a street robber with a threat to kill if money or jewelry is not handed over. Some times parents do it with their children and also teachers with their pupils.
- iii) **Self promotion:** If a person wants to show himself as competent person at some activity this is the tactics mostly used. He does this by accepting or acknowledging some of the minor flaws or weaknesses he has to target person and then go and emphasis the positive traits that the target person was not aware of him. However, there is one danger in using self promotion. i.e. the mismatch between the self promoted claims of competencies and the reality. For example if a person claims to the target person that he is very good at some things and of that skill come upto be tested and he does not show any competencies then he looses his credibility.
- iv) **Exemplification:** Here the goal is to influence the impressions that others are not conscientious workers. The person here wants to prove that he has more integrity and moral worthiness compared to others, and wants to arouse guilty in the target person. He wants to create an impression of a sufferer.

- v) **Supplication:** Here the person advertises his/ her weakness and dependent on other person. He is seeking sympathy. This is usually a last resort i.e. what a person is unable to use any other strategies, he resorts to gaining sympathy. The person is presenting an image of helplessness hoping to elicit a sense obligation from the target.

The person may use all five self presentation tactics on different occasions. So people may specialise in one or other tactic and may use it on more than one occasions. What ever choice or combination, the person's aim is to create the desired impressions someone else, there by increasing the chances of obtaining the desired effect.

4.2.5 Individual Difference in Self Presentation

People strive to influence the images that others form of them during social interaction has been found to be true even through research on self presentation. Though everyone engages in such actions from time to time, there are important differences in the extent to which they control their self presentation. Some people engage in such actions from time to time, there are important differences in the extent to which they control their self presentation and some people engages in this tactics more often and with greater skill.

People differ in exercising control over their verbal and non-verbal cues of self presentation and this is termed as self monitoring of expressive behaviour (Synder 1979). High self monitoring persons are particularly sensitivite to the expressions and the self presentations of others in social situation and they use these as cues in monitoring, their own self presentation for purpose of impression management.

High self monitoring persons are good at learning what is socially appropriate in new situations, have good control of their emotional expression and effectively use these abilities to create the impression they want to display. In fact they can adapt themselves to any social situation, for example: they can adopt the mannerism of a reserved, withdrawn and introverted person and then they can abruptly do about face and portray themselves as equally convincing, friendly, outgoing and extroverted person. In self-presentation situations, high self-monitoring persons are quite likely to seek out social comparisons and information about the appropriate patterns of behaviour. They put in considerable effort in attempting to read and understand others and behave accordingly and guide their self presentation so as to gain approval or power of an interaction. However self presentation on impression management is not for deceptive purposes but is an adaptive skill in environments where there is a complex mixture of people and policies.

Self-presentation and Human Nature: Self presentation is a basic fact of social life. People influence the images of their 'selves' that are projected to others but where is the 'real' self in all this? As already known, each of us have multiple selves which we present to different people in different ways but all of them are many aspects of only one 'true self' self presentation factors is selecting certain characteristics and omitting other. Therefore, presentation of self is an integral part of everyday social interaction.

4.3 BIAS IN ATTRIBUTION

Some biases represent cognitive shortcuts or heuristics. These methods of cutting through masses of information quickly to reach a good explanation.

Other attribution biases come from people's efforts to satisfy their own needs and motives.

The self-serving bias and false consensus biases enhance. Self-esteem and the perceptions that we can control our lives. In short our attributional bias comes from a combination of cognitive and motivational needs. Attribution is a highly rational process of identifying the causes of other's behaviour and follows an orderly cognitive process. But attribution is subject to several forms of bias or tendencies that can lead to serious errors concerning the causes of other's behaviour. They are:

- i) **Fundamental attribution error:** shows our strong tendency to explain others' actions in terms of dispositional (internal) rather than situational causes (external). In short we tend to perceive others as acting as they do because they are 'that kind of person' rather than because of 'situational factors' this happens because, when it is other's behaviour, we concentrate on their actions rather than on context or situation, as a result potential impact of situational causes get less attention.
- ii) **Actor-observer bias:** it is a tendency to attribute our own behaviour to external or situational causes but that of others to internal cause.

Example: let us take an example where, a shop assistant has been rude to you, so in line with the fundamental attribution error (actor-observer bias) you would conclude a dispositional attribution, (internal) and decide that the shop assistant was simply not a nice person. But imagine a time when you were rude to others, do you give the same explanation and consider yourself to be rude and unpleasant person? Probably not you would say that you are a nice person who behaved rudely because of a specific (external) and justifiable reason, for example – stress from work pressure. This tendency to attribute other people's behaviour to internal cause and our own behaviours to external causes is called the actor-observer effect.

- iii) **Self-serving bias:** it is our tendency to take credit for positive behaviours (internal cause) or outcomes but to the blame for negative results on external causes or others.

Example: Imagine you do well in your social psychology exams. Are you likely to attribute your success to luck or a fluke or are you likely to feel quite proud and attribute your success to the effort you put in? According to the self-serving attribution bias it is the latter. Olson and Ross (1988) argue that we are more likely to make internal attribution for our success (ex: I am intelligent) and external attributions for failures (ex: it was a hard paper) because making attributions in this way protect and maintain our self-esteem. Attributing success to one's effort boosts our feelings of self-worth and protects us from feeling bad when we don't do well. This bias can also work group level i.e. we tend to attribute the group's success to internal factors and other groups' success to external factors (Hawstone it is a group-serving attribution.)

4.4 SCHEMAS

Interestingly, schemas, too, can produce such effects, which are sometimes described as a self-fulfilling prophecy – predictions that, in a sense, make themselves come true. Classic evidence for such effects was provided by Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson (1968) during the turbulent 1960's. During that period, there was growing concern over the possibility that teachers' beliefs about minority students – their schemas for such youngsters – were causing them to treat such children differently (less favorably) than majority group students and that, as a result, the minority-group students were falling further and further behind. No, the teachers weren't overtly prejudiced, rather their behaviour was shaped by their expectations and beliefs – their schemas for different racial or ethnic groups.

To gather evidence on the possible occurrence of such effects, Rosenthal and Jacobson conducted an ingenious study that exerted a powerful effect on subsequent research in social psychology. They went to an elementary school in San Francisco and administered an IQ test to all students. They then told the teachers that some of the students had scored very high and were about to bloom academically. In fact, this was not true: the researchers chose the names of these students randomly. But Rosenthal and Jacobson predicted that this information might change teachers' expectations and schemas about these children and hence their behaviour toward them. Teachers were not given such information about other students, who constituted a control group.

To find out whether this were true, Rosenthal and Jacobson returned eight months later and tested both groups of children once again. Results were clear – and dramatic. Those who had been described as “bloomers” to their teachers showed significantly larger gains on the IQ test than those in the control group. In short, teacher's beliefs about the students had operated in a self-fulfilling manner: the students that teachers believed would bloom academically actually did.

How did such effects occur? In part, through the impact of schemas on the teachers' behaviour. Further research (Rosenthal, 1994) indicated that teachers gave the bloomers more attention, more challenging tasks, more and better feedback, and more opportunities to respond in class. In short, the teachers acted in ways that benefited the students they expected to bloom, and as a result, these youngsters really did.

As a result of this early research, social psychologists began to search for other self-confirming effects of schemas in many settings – in education, therapy and business, to name just a few. They soon uncovered much evidence that schemas do often shape behaviour in ways that lead to their confirmation. For example, they found that teachers' lower expectancies for success by minority students or females often undermined the confidence of these groups and actually contributed to poorer performance by them (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). In view of these and many related findings, we now know that stereotypes not only may influence – they may, through their self-confirming effects, shape social reality as well.

Schematic processing has the advantage of speed and efficiency of making events comprehensible and predictable but it has disadvantage of leading to wrong interpretations, inaccurate, expectations and inflexible models of responses.

Oversimplification is a tendency to be overly accepting of information that fits a schema or theory. To fill in gaps in thinking by adding elements that does not belong but are schema consistent. Unwilling to change schema when finding are contradictory.

Once schemas are formed, they exert powerful effects on several aspects of social cognition and therefore on our social behaviour. Research finding suggests that Schemas exert strong effects on three basic process of cognition – attention, encoding and retrieval.

Attention refers to what information we notice

Encoding refers to the process through which information we notice gets stored in the memory.

Retrieval refers to the process through which we recover information from memory in order to use it in some manner – for example – making judgment about people. Suppose you make a judgment about a person x as ‘good’. So with respect to attention, schema acts as filter to filter and select information consistent with our judgment and other information is often ignored. Turning to encoding, here too it is information that is consistent with our schema are stored in memory – for example – the judgment about x as good will remember the incident about what good things he has done to other, than few bad things which are although perceived are not stored in the memory hasty, retrieval from memory again, information remembered is the information which is stored as consistent information with our schema. So although schemas are based on our past experience, which reflect knowledge we have extracted from our experience in the social world are often helpful to us, they have a serious downside, too. By influencing what we notice, remember and recall. Schemas can produce distortions in our understanding of the social world and unfortunately, once formed, schemas are often resistant to change.

Self Assessment Questions 1

Exercise-I

- 1) Write an example about a friend (boy or girl) whom you did not like at the first instance (give reasons for the first), but subsequent interaction with this person made you realise that you were wrong (give reasons for this change)

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2) Take two instances

You were driving, and you have accidentally hit some one (not seriously) by someone:

You were accidentally hit (although not seriously) then what will be your reaction to this incident?

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4.5 ROLE OF EMOTIONS, MOTIVATION IN INFORMATION PROCESSING

Emotions and information processing

The amygdale has a pivotal role in deciphering the emotional significance of sensory stimuli enabling emotional memory formation. If sensory areas convey signals pertinent to the state of the environment, they should issue feed forward projections to the amygdala, arising mainly from the upper layers, consistent with the flow of information from earlier to later processing sensory cortices. The medial temporal pole, the entorhinal and perirhinal areas, and the agranular and dysgranular insula had the densest connections with the amygdala, and the lateral temporal pole, the parahippocampal region, and the granular insula had sparser connections.

Emotion is a subject in psychology that also draws the attention of non-psychologists, but a large difference exists between the popular concept and psychological perspectives of emotion. Popularly, people tend to emphasise the subjective aspects of emotion (Cornelius, 1996) and sometimes wonder whether emotion is too personal to be a subject of scientific research. There are three findings that are important for the study of emotion when we discuss the relationship to its neural mechanisms. (i) First, emotion clearly includes widespread responses. For example, emotions induce specific expressive behaviours. (ii) Emotion generates physiological responses, and each type of emotion generates a specific physiological response pattern (iii) The subjective, physiological, behavioural, and cognitive responses of emotion are intimately related. All these affect the information processing considerably.

Motivation and information processing

The quality of the decision making process depends on both the motivation to search information in the long term memory of the decision maker, and the motivation to ignore information. Not only do past experiences directly impact on the emotional state during decision making but past experiences also represent an important source of information to construct anticipations that will influence the immediate emotion and the decision process.

Research has focused on the relationship between motivation and cognitive and meta-cognitive strategy use (i.e. in which learning goals favour deep learning strategies and performance goals favour superficial learning strategies) and on the relationship between cognitive or meta-cognitive strategy use and achievement (in which it is assumed that deep level learning enhances achievement). Most studies have examined the relationship between motivation and cognitive processing with a cross-sectional design. Multitasking is the human ability to handle the demands of multiple tasks. Multitasking behaviour involves the ordering of multiple tasks and switching between tasks. People often multitask when using information retrieval (IR) technologies as they seek information on more than one information problem over single or multiple search episodes. Studies have shown that apart from cognitive factors, motivation and emotion are important factors in explaining variance in educational state. The question of how motivation facilitates learning and how it enhances performance has been an important point in educational researches. Motivation consists of three components, namely (a) an expectancy-component, (b) a value-component, which refers to the student's goals and beliefs about the importance and interest of the task, finally (c) an affective-component, which refers to the student's emotional responses to the task. Studies on the affective-component have shown that various emotions influence both the quality of thinking and cognitive information processing. Positive emotions, such as curiosity, generally enhance motivation and facilitate learning and performance. Negative emotions, like mild anxiety, can also enhance learning and performance by focusing the learner's attention on a particular task. However, intense negative emotions, like anxiety, panic, insecurity and related thoughts, such as feeling incompetent, generally affect motivation, interfere with learning and contribute to a lower performance. Studies have examined the relationship between motivation and cognitive processing and has shown that there is a positive and significant effect of motivation on achievement. Thus the information processing gets affected by motivation and in turn affects the performance.

4.6 MOTIVATED PERSON PERCEPTION

Although person perception is relatively rational process of taking in information about others and organising it according to particular principles, our goals and feeling about other feeling also influence the information we gather about them.

One factor that influences how we gather information about others is the goal we have for interacting with them. The findings of various studies indicated that Under 'coherent impression' goal conditions, people form more organised impressions of other than when their goal is simply to remember the information (Mathenson, Homes & Kristiansco 1991).

Example: Anticipating future interaction with the target in the future, produced the, greatest recall of the target's behaviour than simply being told to remember the target's attribution.

Example: When someone introduces you to a person and tell you 'keep him in mind' he will be of lot of help to you, in future you might give then more attention to that person's behaviour.

In comparing 'dual processing' distinction between rapid, heuristically based information processing vs more systematic, piecemeal use of information, it was found that social perceivers often use rapid, heuristically based processing when their interactions were not particularly important to them, but they were able to switch to a more systematic style of processing when inferences are important.

The need to be accurate usually produces more extensive and less biased information about a person. In a study by Neurg (1989) half the students were encouraged to form accurate impression about the target and the others were not. It was found that the students who were encouraged to form accurate impression lead to a more thorough and systematic processing of information about people than in conditions where accuracy is not a goal. The above findings suggests that when we want and the goal is carefully chosen to form accurate impression of others we become more alert, mindful and do so. But if the stress is not on 'accurate information', we become more casual unmindful and form impression of others in using shortcut ways you must have come across many parents who complain to others about their child that I know if he wants, he can study and get good marks, but he is lazy and doesnot take things seriously. It is the exact mechanism behind this process 'if we are required to' or 'when we should'.

Also the type of impression one forms of another person also depends on the kind of interaction one anticipates (outcomes dependency) having with the individual. The situation in which achievement of an individual's own goals depends heavily on the behaviour of the other person – typically leads the individual to form a careful impression of the other (Vonk 1999).

Surprisingly many of these behaviours appear to occur without intention or awareness.

4.7 EFFECT OF COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL STATES

Many a times, we are doing 2 to 3 things at a given moment, preparing for the meals, thinking about what happened at work, and forming an impression about someone, are we accurate? It is usually seen that when one is preoccupied, one is more likely to see other people's personal qualities as stable and enduring disposition. This bias occurs because people often fail to consider external influences on another's behaviour.

For example: one factor that influences how we react to others is whether we see ourselves as similar to them. But same is not the case when we see the negative characteristics which we have & we also see it in others, we may psychologically distance ourselves from the person.

The perceiver's impression is also influenced by his or her own specific emotional state. Being in a bad mood might lead us to form a less positive impression of a person, and when we are in a good mood, we tend to see another person more positively. These biasing effects of mood are especially strong when the other person is behaving neutrally.

So mood may influence not only the content of impressions we form of others but also the process we use in forming them.

4.7.1 Emotion Mood and Social Influence

Many of our errors and biases share an important feature. They represent evaluative beliefs. Often we form an emotional commitment to a particular theory or belief that overrides the information as we see it.

However, emotions play a very vital role in decision making and when people ignore their emotions, they may make decisions that work against their interest. Ex: we pick our jobs, or even our college. The increasing researchers are realising that emotion and cognitions are integrated and often work together (Gray 2009).

What is the effect of mood on behaviour? When we are in a good mood, we tend to be sociable and more altruistic and when we are in a bad mood, we withdraw and help people less, Mood also influences memory, judgement, perception, how we make / check our judgements and how we evaluate our world.

People who are chronically in a good or bad mood also make decisions differently for example – extroverted people are especially influenced by positive information, whereas people who are high on neuroticism are more responsive to negative information (Zalenski and Larsen 2002). Our judgements and emotional reaction to situations are also heavily determined by our emotional expectation for example – how much you think you will like a particular movie may affect to how much you like it as much as, the actual experience of the movie itself.

4.7.2 Automatic Evaluation

In recent years, social psychologist have provided compelling evidence that many social cognition processes occur virtually automatically and without awareness – essentially, the years of practice we have had in responding to positive and negative cues in the environment have made our emotional, our cognitive and even our behavioural responses to many situations automatic (Aarts and Dijksterhuis 2003).

We respond to these evaluative cues without needing to attend to them or think about it. It helps to explain how human beings accomplish the vast amount of information processing that they seem to do so effortlessly. In a study John Bargh and his associations (1996) gave students word puzzles to solve. Students were told to circle words embedded in the figure. For some students the words were related to aging Example: slowly, elderly etc and for others the words were related to neutral topics (Corn and Classroom). It was assumed that for the students who received the word puzzle with age related cues, the stereotypes of the elderly would be automatically prime in such a way that it would effect future thoughts and behaviours. After the experiment, those participants who had been primed with the sterotype of the ‘elderly’ walked more slowly than did the participants who had not been so primed.

4.7.3 Motivation and Inferences

How we process and put together the information can be heavily influenced by the inferences we want to make. People often generate and evaluate information in a self serving manner, constructing beliefs that good things will happen to them and bad things will not.

4.7.4 Suppressing Thoughts and Emotions

Suppressing one’s thoughts is difficult and many of these efforts not only fail but also may actually produce a rebound effect (Foriester & Liberman 2001, Wegner 1994) many people find themselves thinking about exactly what they are trying to forget.

Trying to suppress an emotional response to an event involves a lot of effort and as a result not only people find it hard to suppress these feeling but also their physiological processes are affected and they are more aroused. Research suggests that suppression can become a chronic way of dealing with negative aspects of life.

What is the alternative to suppressing negative events? Many people try to reappraise negative experiences instead of suppressing them, which is better? On the whole reappraisers experience more positive emotions, get along better with other people and have better well being, whereas suppressors experience more negative emotions, get along more poorly with others and have lower well being (Gross and John 2003).

Self Assessment Questions 2

Exercise-II

1) Write down two instances from your life or someone else life (who is close to you) wherein because of bad mood, event etc., your performance in an exam, interview, assignment and meeting was affected – vely write down 2-3.

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2) Self presentation tactics employed

Business men

Politician

Actor

Teacher

Parent

4.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to cover the cognitive and motivational basis of social and person perception. We tried to show how neural mechanisms do affect perception etc. We also studied about the impression formation and the processes involved thereof. A discussion in detail about the processes involved in impression management was taken up. Following this a detailed analysis of how one presents oneself was taken up. In these theories of self presentation was discussed and the many tactics that are used in presenting oneself in the correct light were

considered. The attributional bias and the many processes involved were considered. How does emotion and motivation affect the process of information processing was taken up. As is known the individual's cognitive functions do not perform at the peak when the person is in emotional distress, anxiety and depression. It was pointed out as to how mood interferes in many cognitive functions such as decision making, judgement etc. It was also pointed out as to how motivation can make a person perceive quite distortedly and how the inferences one makes under such conditions may be highly biased.

4.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Explain the cognitive and motivational basis of social and person perception and in detail describe the bias in attribution.
- 2) How the information gathered about a person is distorted and what emotional factors influence it.
- 3) Describe the various self presentation tactics used to manage a favourable impression.

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4.11 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Self Assessment Questions 1 (Exercise I)

- 1) Examine the changes in I and II reason. Now do you realise how quickly we generalise the information which might be mislead.

- 2) Did it clarify the two different versions of the similar instance, which clearly indicate the difference between our attitude when we are involved in an incident as an actor and when we are the onlooker or observer.

Self Assessment Questions 2 (Exercise II)

- 1) Example – 10 my grandmother expired, one day before my crucial exam, and as I was close to her, I could do my 10th exam well.
- 2) Example – Business men
Politician – Intimidation, self promotion
Actor - Ingratiation
Teacher - intimidation
Parent – intimidation



UNIT 1 DEFINITION, CONCEPT, DESCRIPTION, CHARACTERISTIC OF ATTITUDE

Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Defining Attitudes
- 1.3 Attitudes, Values and Beliefs
 - 1.3.1 Attitudes and Values
 - 1.3.2 Attitudes and Beliefs
- 1.4 Formation of Attitudes
 - 1.4.1 Classical Conditioning
 - 1.4.2 Instrumental Conditioning
 - 1.4.3 Observational Learning
 - 1.4.4 Genetic Factors
- 1.5 Functions of Attitudes
 - 1.5.1 Utilitarian Function
 - 1.5.2 Knowledge Function
 - 1.5.3 Ego-Defensive Function
 - 1.5.4 Value-Expressive Function
 - 1.5.5 Social Identity Function
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 SAQs- Possible Answers
- 1.8 Unit End Questions
- 1.9 Glossary
- 1.10 Suggested Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

“Oooh chocolate ice cream. I just love it!”, “I hate smokers”, “Black colour looks really classy”, “Yuck! I can’t stand sea food”, “I love social psychology”, and so on. All the above statements show that we react to our environment in an evaluative manner. We are constantly making judgments about whether objects, events, ourselves, and others are favorable or unfavourable, likeable or unlikeable, good or bad. This falls in the domain of attitudes. Social psychologists who study attitudes investigate factors involved in such evaluations; how they are formed, changed, and so on.

In this unit, we will examine the concept of an attitude, how attitudes are formed, and what functions are served by holding attitudes. When you have finished learning this unit, you should have some understanding of attitude and its relevance.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Define attitudes;
- Differentiate between attitudes, values and beliefs;
- Explain how attitudes are formed; and
- Describe the functions served by attitudes.

1.2 DEFINING ATTITUDES

The study of attitudes has been at the forefront of social psychology for many years. Attitude field is vast and diverse accumulating over 80-plus years. The study of attitudes has been a core topic in social psychology. Attitudes are involved in practically every other area of the discipline, including social perception, interpersonal attraction, prejudice and discrimination, conformity, compliance, and so on. The chief reason why the concept of attitude is so central to psychology is because the aim of psychology is to study behaviour, and attitudes are *supposed to* influence behaviour (whether or not and how and when they will be discussed in Unit 3).

Let us first try to understand what exactly an attitude is.

Early on attitudes were defined very broadly. Allport (1935) defined attitude as

“a mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, and exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related” (p. 784).

With such a broad definition it is easy to see why attitudes were seen as the central construct of social psychology.

Since Allport, the definition of attitude has evolved considerably and become narrower. Attitudes are now looked as evaluative statements— either favorable or unfavorable- concerning some aspect of the social world. For instance, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) define an attitude as

“a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object” (p. 6).

“Object” includes people, things, events, and issues. When you use such words as like, dislike, love, hate, good, bad, yuck, etc. you are describing your attitudes. In this view, attitudes then are evaluations of a particular person, group, action, or thing.

A similar definition was proposed by Eagly and Chaiken (1993), according to whom,

“Attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (p. 1).

Thus an attitude is focused on a particular entity or object, rather than all objects and situation with which it is related.

Psychologists use specialized terms to describe certain classes of attitudes. For e.g., an attitude towards the self is called *self-esteem*, negative attitudes towards specific groups are called *prejudice*, attitudes towards individuals are called *interpersonal attraction*, and attitude towards own job is called *job satisfaction*.

Simply defined, attitudes are generally positive or negative views of a person (including oneself) place, thing, or event (the attitude object).

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| <p>Self Assessment Questions</p> <p>Define attitude in your own words.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Why is attitude considered the central construct of social psychology?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> |
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1.3 ATTITUDES, VALUES AND BELIEFS

There are two psychological constructs closely associated with attitudes: values and beliefs.

1.3.1 Attitudes and Values

The most frequently cited definition of what constitutes a human value is offered by Rokeach (1973) as an “enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence” (p.5). Values constitute an important aspect of self-concept and serve as guiding principles for an individual. Rokeach argued that, considered together, values form values systems where a value system is “an enduring organisation of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of importance” (1973, p.5). Thus the importance of different values should co-vary with the importance of others in the value system. For e.g. you may value ‘honesty’ over ‘success’.

Human values are strongly prescriptive in nature and form the core around which other less enduring beliefs are organised. As such they are important in a range of other processes, like attitudes. It is contended that the formation of specific attitudes is predicated upon more general values. Values indirectly influence behaviour through their influence on attitudes.

Although values *can* shape attitudes, it does not however mean that values shape *all* attitudes. For e.g. your attitude towards say love versus arranged marriage is probably shaped by your values, but your preference for one brand of toothpaste over another is less likely to be influenced by important life goals. It is clear that some attitudes are formed through the influence of long-standing values internalized early in life. These are called symbolic attitudes, because the attitude object is a symbol of something else. In contrast, there are some attitudes that are based on utility, a direct benefits and costs of the attitude object. These are called instrumental attitudes, because they are instrumental to meet those needs. Interestingly the same attitude object could serve a symbolic or an instrumental need. For e.g. your decision to eat only vegetarian food could be based on utility (if you stay in a place like Europe or America where it is more difficult to get vegetarian food) or taste-instrumentally based attitudes— versus considerations of animal rights and right to live-symbolically based values.

Values are relatively more stable and enduring than attitudes, since they are basic notions about what is right and wrong. Attitudes are less stable than values. Further, if we know an individual’s values, we are better able to predict his behaviour in a particular situation.

1.3.2 Attitudes and Beliefs

Beliefs are cognitions about the probability that an object or event is associated with a given attribute (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Some theorists regard belief as one component of an attitude. However, there are differences between attitude and belief. Attitude can be considered as the sum of beliefs. A person can have many beliefs about a phenomenon (positive and negative). This person will have an attitude toward that phenomenon based on the overall evaluation of her beliefs. For e.g. I may believe that Pepsi is sweet; it contains preservatives; it is high on calories (belief); I like Pepsi (Attitude).

According to Eagly and Chaiken (1993), it is possible to verify or falsify some beliefs (at least) using external criteria. For e.g. the belief that water freezes at 0 degree Celsius can be verified either factually or even by agreement among many individuals; yet few attitudes can be ‘tested’ using such interjudge consensus. Most social attitudes, such as political, aesthetic, or consumer preferences are largely variable across people. You may like Pepsi; your friend may not like it at all!

Both beliefs and values are central to the dynamic forces that form and transform existing attitudes.

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| <p>Self Assessment Questions</p> <p>Differentiate between attitudes and values.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> |
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Differentiate between attitude and beliefs.

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Give examples of attitudes, values and beliefs and relate their importance.

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1.4 FORMATION OF ATTITUDES

Right from our birth onwards, we are exposed to a wide variety of stimuli, both directly and indirectly, which lead to our acquiring particular attitudes towards the attitudinal object. It is believed that attitudes are by and large acquired as a result of various life experiences, although a small but growing body of evidence indicates that attitudes may be influenced by genetic factors, too.

A number of theories have been used to identify what lead to formation and maintenance of attitudes (Refer Figure 1)

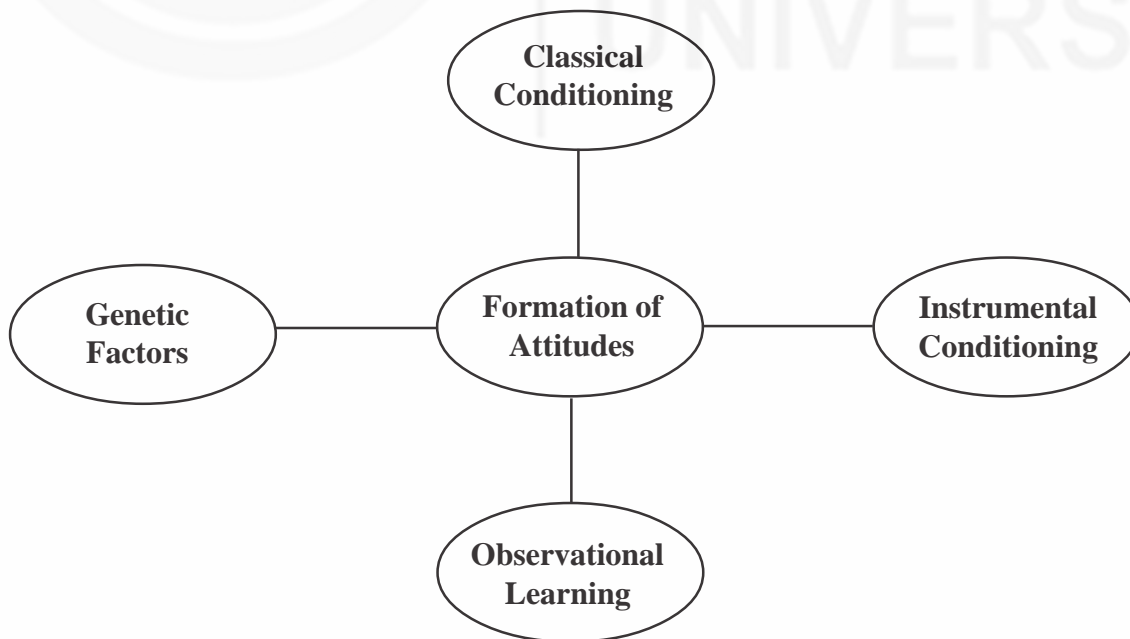


Fig. 1.1: Perspectives to attitude formation

Let us examine these factors one by one.

1.4.1 Classical Conditioning

The process of classical conditioning was first described by Pavlov. In his experiments on dogs, he found that after repeated pairings of an unconditioned stimulus (e.g. bell) with a conditioned stimulus (dog), the latter acquires the capacity to evoke a conditioned response (salivation), similar to the old, unconditioned response (salivation).

It has been suggested that in the same way that a bell can evoke a physiological response, classical conditioning can produce a positive/negative attitude towards a previously neutral object. Arthur and Carolyn Staats (1958) were two of the first researchers who systematically studied the classical conditioning of attitudes. They conducted an experiment in which the goal was to condition positive and negative attitudes to the names of countries (Sweden and Holland) which previously were regarded neither positively nor negatively. During 108 conditioning trials, two nationalities were always followed by a negative word (e.g. failure), two were paired with positive adjectives (e.g. happy, gift), and two others were paired with neutral words (e.g. table). At the end of the experiment, it was indeed found that participants held more positive attitudes towards the nationalities associated with positive words and more negative attitudes toward those associated with negative words.

Classical conditioning could play a role in establishing some of the emotional components of attitudes and prejudice. Further, through classical conditioning, people may come to have powerful attitudinal reactions to social objects even in the absence of firsthand experience. Hence, children who hear repeated pairings of words in their parents' conversations (such as say, Muslims-Aggressive, Muslims-Fundamentalists) throughout their early years of development may come to adopt such negative attitudes themselves— without even meeting them.

1.4.2 Instrumental Conditioning

Child: “Mummy, doesn't *Mausi* look nice in her green dress? She really knows how to carry herself.”

Mother: “You are absolutely right dear. I've felt that for some time now and was hoping you would agree. Your dress sense is really getting evolved. You can now suggest me what to wear the next time we go out.”

This kind of conversation illustrates quite clearly the role of reinforcement in attitude formation. Following her mother's agreement, it is likely that the child's initial responses of a positive attitude about *Mausi* will be reinforced. Of course, had the child remarked that *Mausi* looks awful; the mother might have reacted with displeasure, thereby punishing the remark. Following reward, the child's attitude is likely to be strengthened; whereas punishment would probably lead to a weakening of the attitude.

This is the process of instrumental conditioning, a basic form of learning studied by Thorndike (1911) and Skinner (1938). According to this, behaviours that are followed by positive outcomes tend to be strengthened, while those that are followed by negative outcomes are suppressed. The degree to which attitudes are verbally or nonverbally reinforced by others will affect the acquiring and maintenance of attitudes. For e.g. early in your life, if your parents and teachers

praised you for doing well in studies, you may have doubled your efforts and developed a positive attitude towards studies. However if your friend's parents did not acknowledge her achievements in studies, she would have probably developed a negative attitude toward studies.

1.4.3 Observational Learning

In both classical and instrumental conditioning approaches to attitude formation, the person has direct contact or experience (as in the case of Staats experiment) with the attitudinal object. However, it is also true that people may acquire attitudes simply by observing the rewards and punishments that others get for their espousal of those attitudes. The phenomenon by which a person acquires new forms of behaviour or thought simply by observing others is called observational learning. For example, you might develop a negative attitude towards the college canteen if you saw someone throwing up after having a meal there. Although your friend's newly formed dislike is due to instrumental conditioning, your negative attitude is a result of observational learning.

The rationale behind commercials of say, Pizza Hut which show someone ordering and then obviously enjoying a pizza is that the viewer will also form a positive attitude vicariously and imitate such behaviour in the future.

1.4.4 Genetic Factors

Some research (Waller et al., 1990; Keller et al., 1992) indicates that our attitudes, at least a tendency to develop certain views about various topics or issues, are inherited. For instance, Arvey et al. (1989) studied the level of job satisfaction of 34 sets of identical twins separated from each other at an early age, and found that approximately 30% of job satisfaction appears to be explainable by genetic factors. Tesser (1993) has argued that hereditary variables may affect attitudes—but believes that they may do so indirectly.

Additional research suggests that genetic factors play a stronger role in shaping some attitudes than others. For e.g., attitudes involving gut-level preferences (say a preference for a certain kind of food) may be more strongly influenced by genetic factors than attitudes that are more cognitive in nature (say attitudes towards environment conservation).

Self Check Exercises

Note: i) Tick mark the correct answer.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) The psychological construct that deals with important life goals that go beyond specific situations is:
 - a) Value, b) Attitude, c) Belief, d) Behaviour
- 2) Parents reward children with smiles, approvals, or hugs for stating the 'right' view— the ones that they themselves approve. Which type of learning does this process represent?
 - a) Classical Conditioning
 - b) Instrumental Conditioning
 - c) Observational Learning
 - d) Insight Learning

3) Khushi and Ayush are two well-behaved and happy children who are members of a loving family. During the course of their young lives they have developed extremely negative attitudes toward various minority groups. They have listened to their parents and other adults continuously use negative words such as stupid, lazy, dirty in referring to minority members. Which type of learning does this process represent?

- a) Classical Conditioning
- b) Instrumental Conditioning
- c) Observational Learning
- d) Insight Learning

4) What are the components of attitudes? Give an example to substantiate your statement.

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5) Discuss the process of attitude formation.

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1.5 FUNCTIONS OF ATTITUDES

From the above it is obvious that we hold many attitudes about almost all aspects of the world around us. Are you wondering why we bother forming the many attitudes that each one of us have? In this section, we will throw light on some functions served by attitudes.

The functional utility of attitudes was pointed out by Allport (1935) in his classic discussion of attitudes. According to him, attitude was social psychology’s most indispensable concept. He stated, “Without guiding attitudes the individual is confused and baffled...Attitudes determine for each individual what he will see

and hear, what he will think and what he will do...they 'engender meaning upon the world'; they draw lines about and segregate an otherwise chaotic environment; they are our methods for finding our way about in an ambiguous universe" (Allport, 1935, p. 806).

This has been termed as the object appraisal function by Fazio (2000). According to him, the mere possession of any attitude is useful to the individual in terms of orienting him to the attitudinal object. This object appraisal function can be regarded as the primary value of having an attitude. Fazio goes on to state, "Every attitude, regardless of any other functional benefits that it may also provide, serves this object appraisal function". (p. 4)

Similarly both Katz (1960) and Smith, Bruner and White (1956) commented on this object — appraisal function in their functional theory of attitudes. One of the fundamental assumptions of functional theory is that we often hold or express our attitudes and preferences in order to communicate something about ourselves to other people. This implies that attitudes towards specific issues, products, or ideas serve to convey broader information about us to those who are interested. For e.g. Smith et al. (1956) said, "Attitudes aid us in classifying for action the objects of the environment, and they make appropriate response tendencies available for coping with these objects" (p. 41).

Katz (1960) takes the view that attitudes are determined by the functions they serve for us. People hold given attitudes because these attitudes help them achieve their basic goals. Katz distinguishes four types of psychological functions that attitudes meet. Let us examine these four functions now.

1.5.1 Utilitarian Function (also Called Instrumental Function)

We develop certain attitudes towards objects that aid or reward us. We want to maximize rewards and minimize penalties. Katz says we develop positive attitudes towards those objects that are associated with rewards and develop negative attitudes toward those that are associated with punishment. For e.g. if you are a graduate looking for a job, if you belong to a minority community (say Other Backward Classes) which has job reservations, you will favour the political party that introduced such reservations. On the other hand, if you belong to the majority, you might develop a negative attitude towards the same party because it 'took away some jobs from the general quota and reserved them for OBCs'. We are more likely to change our attitudes if doing so allows us to fulfill our goals or avoid undesirable consequences.

If you think this function seems close to instrumental conditioning, you are right. It does come from a behaviourist perspective.

1.5.2 Knowledge Function

We all have a need to attain some degree of meaningful, stable, clear, and organised view of the world (just as most of us have a need to maintain an organised cupboard!) Attitudes satisfy this knowledge function by providing a frame of reference for organizing our world so that it makes sense. Using such a cognitive perspective, attitudes serve as schemas that help us in organizing and interpreting social information.

For e.g. people who hold traditional gender stereotypes (such as 'a woman's place is in the home') will have greater satisfaction with the current status of

women at work and will explain the low number of women in high positions in office (glass ceiling effect) with traditional gender explanations. Via such attitudes as stereotypes, we can bring order and clarity to the complexities of human life (even if misplaced!)

1.5.3 Ego-Defensive Function

Some attitudes serve to protect us from acknowledging basic truths about ourselves or the harsh realities of life. These can help a person cope with emotional conflicts and protect self-esteem. As you would've noticed, this comes from a psychoanalytic perspective, and assumes that attitudes serve as defense mechanisms. For example, a new mother might feel bad about herself after experiencing a sudden urge to hit her crying child, and to defend against this threat to self-esteem, she might develop a positive attitude toward spoiling the child. The rationalisation might be, 'of course I don't want her to get spoiled by giving in to her whims every time.'

1.5.4 Value-Expressive Function

Value-expressive attitudes show who we are, and what we stand for. Hence they serve to demonstrate one's self-image to others and to express our basic values. This function comes from a humanistic perspective. It seems logical to assume that only important and strongly self-related (central) attitudes should serve the value-expressive function.

For e.g. you may have a negative attitude towards homosexuals because your religion considers homosexuality to be immoral (although I personally don't think any religion degrades homosexuality). The fact that you may never have had a bad experience with anyone who was homosexual is irrelevant. Your negative attitude satisfies your value-expressive function, allowing you to express an important value associated with a religious group with which you strongly identify. By extension, if you don't strongly identify with your religious group, your negative attitude towards homosexuals will not have much effect on your self-esteem.

1.5.5 Social Identity Function

Other than the basic four functions served by attitudes suggested by Katz, Shavitt (1989) added another social identity function of attitudes. This refers to the informativeness of attitudes for person impressions, or how much attitudes appear to convey about the people who hold them. Shavitt and Nelson (2000) suggested that products tend to engage a utilitarian function to the extent that they are seen as expressing identity and values, the product is generally displayed in public or is visible to others, or the product is widely seen as symbolizing membership in a particular group. For e.g. the purchase of an Indian flag on the Republic Day may be driven primarily by social identity goals.

In addition to investigating how attitude functions vary among people, current researches in the field also consider the possibility that different attitude objects may actually serve different functions for different people. For e.g. people purchase certain products to fulfill utilitarian needs (computers, television, etc.) and other products to satisfy value-expressive needs (for e.g. a particular brand of car). Further, an attitude changes when it no longer serves its function, and the individual feels blocked or frustrated. Thus, those who are interested in changing

other people's attitudes must first determine what functions those attitudes serve for the targeted individuals, and then use an appropriate approach.

Self Check Exercises

- 1) What are the various functions of attitudes ? Discuss each of these functions with an example from real life situation.

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Note: Tick mark the correct answer.

Check your answer with the answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Rahul is not performing well on his job and is unjustly blaming his problems on his 'difficult' boss. Which function is served by holding such negative attitudes towards his boss?
- a) Value-Expressive
 - b) Knowledge
 - c) Utilitarian
 - d) Ego-Defensive
- 2) Roshni regards herself to be an enlightened feminist; and therefore cultivates attitudes that she believes indicate such a core value. Which function is served by such attitudes?
- a) Value-Expressive
 - b) Knowledge
 - c) Utilitarian
 - d) Ego-Defensive

1.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed the definition, concept, formation, and functions of attitudes. Attitudes are generally positive or negative views of a person (including oneself), place, thing, or event-the attitude object. They differ somewhat from values and beliefs. Values are concerned with important life goals and may shape attitudes; beliefs are one component of attitudes that can be verified (or falsified) using external criteria.

Attitudes are formed by a number of mechanisms. In classical conditioning, attitudes form when a previously neutral attitude object comes to evoke an attitude response by being paired with some other object that naturally evokes the attitude response. Another powerful way in which attitudes are formed is through instrumental conditioning, using reward and punishment contingencies. Some attitudes are also formed via observational learning by vicariously experiencing rewards and punishments given to others. Finally, genetic factors play a role in shaping some attitudes. The functional approach says that we hold attitudes that fit our needs. All attitudes, regardless of any other needs that they fulfill, also serve an object appraisal function. Early functional theorists proposed four psychological functions that attitudes may serve: utilitarian, knowledge, ego-defensive, and value-expressive. A social-identity function of attitude was added later.

1.7 SAQS- POSSIBLE ANSWERS

- 1) a: Value
- 2) b: Instrumental Conditioning
- 3) d: Ego-defensive
- 4) a: Value-Expressive

1.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Define attitudes. Explain the difference between attitudes, values and beliefs.
- 2) Discuss the theories that explain how attitudes are formed.
- 3) What functions are served by attitudes? Using the same example, discuss how the same attitudinal object may serve different functions.

1.9 GLOSSARY

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| Belief | : Any cognitive content held as true. |
| Classical Conditioning | : Learning through association, when a neutral stimulus (conditioned stimulus) is paired with a stimulus (unconditioned stimulus) that naturally produces a response. |
| Defense Mechanisms | : Unconscious tactics used to safeguard the mind against feelings and thoughts that are too difficult for the conscious mind to cope with, for instance, forgetting, rationalisation, denial, repression, projection, etc. |
| Functional Theory of Attitudes: | Attitudes are determined by the functions they serve for us. |
| Glass Ceiling | : Attitudinal or organisational bias in the workplace that prevents women and other minorities from advancing to leadership positions. |
| Instrumental Conditioning | : A type of learning in which behaviour is strengthened if followed by reinforcement and weakened if followed by punishment. |
| Schema | : A cognitive framework that helps organise and interpret information. |
| Values | : Enduring beliefs about important life goals that go beyond specific situations. |

1.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

Baron, R. A., Branscombe, N. R., & Byrne, D. (2009). *Social Psychology*, 12th Ed. Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

Franzoi, S.L. (2008). *Social Psychology*, 5th Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.

UNIT 2 COMPONENTS OF ATTITUDE

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 ABCs of Attitudes
 - 2.2.1 Affect
 - 2.2.2 Cognition
 - 2.2.3 Behaviour
- 2.3 Properties of Attitudes
 - 2.3.1 Attitude Strength
 - 2.3.2 Attitude Accessibility
 - 2.3.3 Attitude Ambivalence
- 2.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.5 SAQs-Possible Answers
- 2.6 Unit End Questions
- 2.7 Glossary
- 2.8 Suggested Readings

2.0 INTRODUCTION

We saw in the last unit that attitudes are favourable or unfavourable evaluations of people, objects, or events — or just about anything in our environment. Regardless of how you might evaluate, what exactly is an attitude made of? Is it a feeling? Is it a thought? Is it an act? In this unit, we will examine the three basic components of attitudes.

If I were to ask you, ‘What is your attitude towards lizards?’ your answer might be quite clearly negative. If I were to now ask you, ‘What is your attitude towards giving death penalty to kidnappers?’ your answer might not be as clear. Clearly then, attitudes have several properties that are dynamic and have implications for information processing, retrieval and behaviour. We shall also discuss some such properties in this unit.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Name the three components of attitudes;
- Describe the affective, cognitive and behavioural components of attitudes;
- Explain the dimensions of attitude strength;
- Define attitude accessibility; and
- Define attitude ambivalence.

2.2 THE ABCS OF ATTITUDE

Favourable or unfavourable evaluations towards something that define a person’s attitude can be exhibited in beliefs, feelings, or inclinations to act. This is known

as the multidimensional or tricomponent view of attitudes (e.g., Breckler, 1984; Katz & Stotland, 1959). These three components represent the basic building blocks of attitudes.

Consider for example, my attitude towards swimming. Because I *believe* that it is an excellent form of exercise, I *feel* liking towards it, and therefore *intend to* swim every day (at least in summers!). These dimensions are known as the ABCs of attitudes: affect (feelings), behaviour (tendency to act), and cognition (thoughts) (Refer to Figure 2.1).

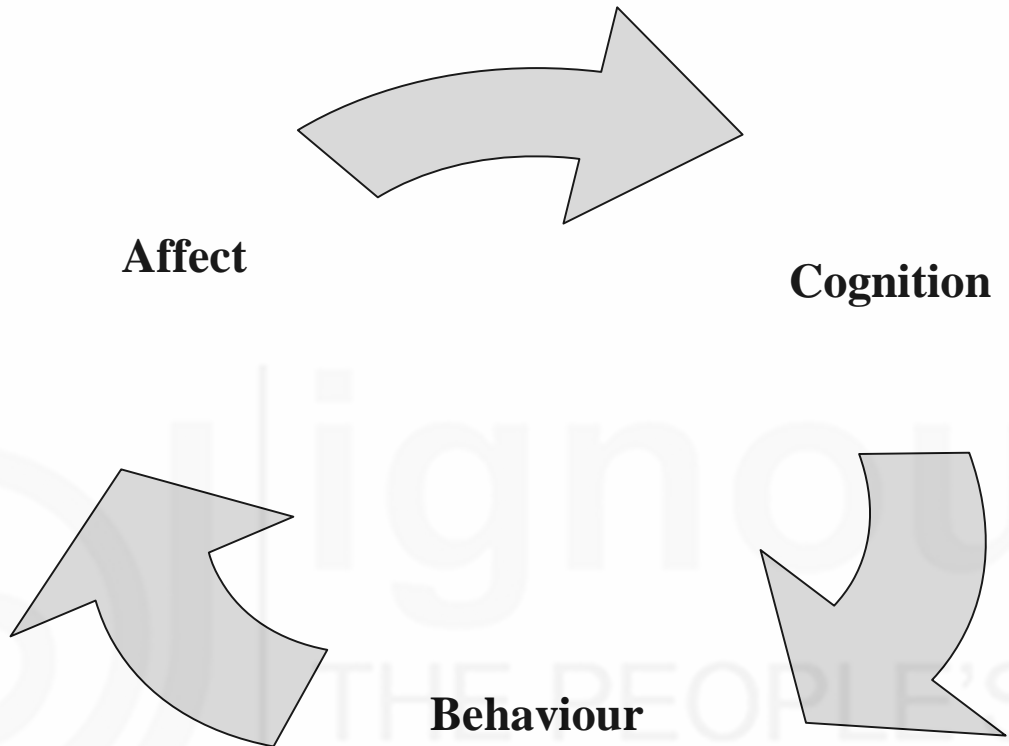


Fig. 2.1: The ABCs of Attitudes (Adapted from Myers, 2005, p. 134)

Let us examine these three components more closely.

2.2.1 Affect

Affect refers to feelings or emotions that are evoked by a particular person, item, or event — the attitude object, or the focus of our attitude, for e.g. fear, sympathy, hate, like, pleasure. You may feel positively or negatively about your boss, the painting in your office lobby, or the fact that your company just bagged a big contract (it may mean a bigger bonus; it may also mean strict and deadlines and hard work!).

Obviously, such feelings can vary in intensity. For example, I may very strongly like classical music, but have only a casual dislike of carrots. Such feelings form from our experiences (or observing experiences) and serve to guide our future behaviour. I may be more inclined to go to a musical concert by Pandit Bhimsen Joshi; and may be less inclined to avoid carrots.

Much of attitude research has emphasized the importance of affective or emotion components. Emotion works hand-in-hand with the cognitive process, or the way we think about an issue or situation. Emotional appeals are commonly found in advertising, health campaigns and political messages. Any discrete emotion

can be used in a persuasive appeal; this may include jealousy, disgust, indignation, fear, humour, and anger. For e.g. a pack of cigarettes now contains a picture of black lungs along with a message that says ‘Smoking Kills: Tobacco causes cancer’ designed to arouse fear.

Research suggests that affect plays a very important role in attitude formation. For instance, Kim, Lim, & Bhargava (1998) conducted two experiments, using established conditioning procedures, to assess the impact of affect on formation of attitudes about certain products. The results indicated that affect can influence attitudes even in the absence of product beliefs (Experiment 1). Further, affect plays as important or more important a role than the belief mechanism in attitude formation, depending on the number of repetitions (Experiment 2).

Affect is a common component in attitude change, persuasion, social influence, and even decision making. How we feel about an outcome may override purely cognitive rationales.

2.2.2 Cognition

Attitudes involve more than just feeling— they also involve knowledge— what you believe to be the case about an attitude object. For e.g. you might believe that studying psychology will help you understand other people better and equip you to deal with them. Whether it is completely accurate or completely false (quite true in this case), this belief comprises the cognitive component of your attitude towards psychology. When you form your opinion or judgment on the basis of available information and decide whether you have a favourable or unfavourable opinion on that, it is the cognitive part of an attitude we are talking about.

The term cognition literally means ‘to know’, ‘to conceptualize’, or ‘to recognize’. Hence the cognitive component of attitude is the storage component where we organise information about an attitude object. It comprises of our thoughts, beliefs, opinions, and ideas about the attitudinal object. As we saw in the last unit, beliefs are cognitions about the probability that an object or event is associated with a given attribute (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). When a human being is the object of an attitude, the cognitive component is frequently a stereotype, for e.g. ‘Punjabis are fun loving’.

It is suggested that the congruence between affective and cognitive components may influence the intention to behave. For e.g. whether someone actually uses a condom may depend upon the congruence between his feeling about it (pleasure versus displeasure) and his belief that using a condom will prevent him from AIDS.

2.2.3 Behaviour

As just mentioned, the things you believe about something (for e.g. ‘my boss is corrupt and is misusing company funds’) and the way you feel about it (e.g. ‘I can’t stand working for him’) may have some effect on the way you are predisposed to behave (e.g. ‘I’m going to quit my present job’). Thus, attitudes have a behavioural component— a tendency or a predisposition to act in a certain manner. Note that behaviour is different from a behavioural tendency.

It may seem logical to assume that if we have a negative attitude for a particular object— your boss in the above example— it is likely to be translated into a

particular type of behaviour, such as avoidance of your boss and even looking for an alternative job. However, such behavioural tendency may not actually be predictive of your actual behaviour. Behaviours are typically defined as overt actions of an individual. For e.g. although you may be *interested* in taking a new job, you might not *actually* take it if a better one (with higher or at least similar salary and designation) is not available. It is thus important to note that your intention to behave in a certain way may or may not translate into how you actually behave. It is more reasonable to assume that one's *behavioural* intention, the verbal indication or typical behavioural tendency of an individual, rather than *actual* behaviour is more likely to be in tune with his affective and cognitive components.

Consider this: You may *believe* that smoking is injurious to health; you may *fear* that you may get cancer; yet you may continue to smoke. At the same time you may have an intention to quit smoking. Hence, your behaviour towards an attitude object may not be in line with how you feel about it (affect) and what you know about it (cognition). We will examine the link between attitude and behaviour more closely in the next unit.

Though most attitudes have all three components, they can be more strongly rooted in either the cognitive or the affective component. It is also possible that all three aspects are not always present in an attitude. Research indicates that not all three of these components need to be in place for an attitude to exist (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). For e.g. you could develop a positive attitude towards a product that you see on television (say a sauna belt) without developing any beliefs about it (you may lack knowledge about it and hence don't know if it will really work) or ever engaging in any purchase behaviour.

In fact, research has demonstrated that we can develop a positive attitude towards a product simply by repeatedly being exposed to it. This is known as the mere exposure effect (Zajonc, 1968), the tendency to develop more positive feelings towards objects and individuals, the more we are exposed to them. We seem to naturally develop a liking for those things that are repeatedly presented to us, be it a stranger in a neighbourhood or our own face! Don't you start liking a song and maybe even humming it after hearing it many times on the radio. Let me give another quick demonstration.

Activity:

Answer the following question quickly, without giving much thought: What are your favourite letters of the alphabet?

I am sure you would have answered with the letter with which your own name begins? This demonstrates a well-demonstrated phenomenon in social psychology: people of different nationalities, languages, and ages prefer the letters appearing in their own name, and those that frequently appear in their own language. This is line with the mere exposure effect.

The significance of the mere exposure effect regarding the three components of attitudes is simple. It illustrates how sometimes affect can become associated with an object independent of any knowledge about it. These feeling-based attitudes represent a very powerful form of evaluation, though affective and cognitive components tend to be intertwined. For primarily affect-based attitudes, it is more difficult to produce cognitive counterarguments in the resistance to persuasion and attitude change.

Self Check Exercises

Consider the following three components of Rahul's attitude towards his friend Garv. Tick mark the correct component of attitude that is represented by each statement:

Note: Check your answer with the answers given at the end of the unit.

I think Garv is kind, charming and humourous.

(a) Affective (b) Cognitive (c) Behavioural

I feel good when I am with Garv.

(a) Affective (b) Cognitive (c) Behavioural

I try to hang out with Garv whenever I get the chance.

(a) Affective (b) Cognitive (c) Behavioural

2.3 PROPERTIES OF ATTITUDES

For many years social psychologists have been interested in the structural properties of attitudes. One way to examine structure of attitudes is look at its three components—the ABCs of attitudes. Another way in which we can examine the structure of attitudes is by exploring their dynamic implication for information processing, retrieval and judgment. Attitudes have dynamic properties in addition to the somewhat static ones, as discussed in the previous section. Let us examine the dynamic properties of attitudes now.

2.3.1 Attitude Strength

Attitudes differ in strength. Strong, central attitudes are attitudes that refer to important attitude objects that are strongly related to the self. These attitudes are often related to important values. Attitude strength involves several dimensions, such as

Certainty: How much the individual knows about the attitude object.

Intensity and extremity: Extremity refers to the degree of favorableness or unfavorableness towards the attitude object. Intensity refers to the strength of the feeling, i.e. how strong is the emotional reaction provoked by the attitude object. For e.g. both Tanya and Vedika have a negative attitude towards dogs. Tanya avoids touching a dog, while Vedika grows pale even at the sight of a dog.

Attitude origin: Attitudes formed through direct experience are generally stronger than those formed without such experience. Vedika may have been bitten by a dog herself, while Tanya may have just heard about her story.

Personal Importance: The extent to which an individual cares about the attitude.

One key determinant of personal importance is vested interest—the extent to which the attitude is personally relevant to the individual who holds it, in that the object or issue to which it refers has important consequences for this individual. For e.g. if a new law is proposed that prohibits drinking below the age of 25 years, you may react more strongly to it if you are around 22-23 years as opposed to if you are 40 years old and thus unaffected by the change in drinking

Research shows that the greater such vested interest, the stronger will be the impact of such an attitude on behaviour. Further, attitudes that are intense, important, or held with great certainty are associated with clearer and more univocal and accessible attitudinal cues.

2.3.2 Attitude Accessibility

Attitude accessibility refers to the ease with which attitudes can be retrieved from memory, in other words how readily available is an attitude about an object, issue, or situation. Some attitudes are characterized by clear, univocal, and highly accessible cues in memory; whereas others are associated with weak, ambiguous and inaccessible cues. Accessibility is assumed to reflect the strength of association in memory between the representation of the attitudinal object and the evaluation of the object along a dimension ranging from positive to negative.

Attitudes that are more accessible from memory are more predictive of behaviour, influence what messages are attended to, and how those messages are processed, and are more stable across time. Research has found highly accessible attitudes to be more predictive of a wide variety of behaviours such as voting and selection of consumer products than are attitudes low in accessibility.

Consider the following example. Suppose you see a cockroach. You might have a very quick 'yuck' response. The fast yuck response indicates an accessible attitude toward spiders. You do not have to think about whether you like cockroaches (who does?), rather the mere presence of a spider results in the activation of your attitude. Now imagine you are walking down a road with a friend looking for a place to eat. Your friend points to a Thai restaurant and suggests that you both eat there. Now you may have to think about whether you like Thai food, because you are not really sure what you think of it, before deciding that it is good/bad and that you are ready to eat there. The fact that you have to ponder whether you like something suggests that either you have a relatively inaccessible attitude or you have never formed an attitude toward that object.

Some factors are related to attitude accessibility: attitude importance, affect versus cognitive evaluation, repeated expression of the attitude. Let us consider them one by one.

Research has found that issue involvement, the relevance and salience of an issue or situation to an individual, is not only correlated with attitude strength (as we saw in the previous section), but also attitude access. Attitude importance and attitude accessibility are also related. Importance can result in more active seeking of attitude relevant information and more extensive elaboration of that information, which can lead to greater accessibility.

Studies have shown that responses to affective evaluations are generally given faster than responses to cognitive evaluations, suggesting that affect-based evaluations are more accessible in memory than cognition-based evaluations. For example, in a study examining 20 different attitude objects, a positive correlation was found between the extent to which attitude objects were described in affective terms and the accessibility of attitudes towards the object (Fazio, 1995).

Finally, repeated expression of an attitude tends to make that attitude more accessible in the future (Powell & Fazio, 1984). The more frequently we ask a subject about his attitude towards an object or issue, the quicker will be his subsequent responses to that same object or issue. Also, if an attitude object was initially evaluated positively, repeated attitude expression will cause positive object features to become more strongly associated with the object than negative features, thereby leading to greater extremity. And lastly, reporting an attitude on one issue facilitates subsequent reports of related or linked attitudes. For e.g. if I am asked my opinion on whether I think smoking is harmful, I will also think about tobacco chewing.

Past studies conclude that accessible attitudes are more resistant to change. Attitude accessibility has also been shown to predict behaviour. An accessible attitude is more likely to result in attitudinally consistent behaviour than a less accessible attitude of the same valence.

2.3.3 Attitude Ambivalence

People can also be conflicted or ambivalent toward an object, meaning that they simultaneously possess both positive and negative attitudes toward the object in question. Attitude ambivalence refers to the fact that our evaluations of objects, issues, events, or people are not always uniformly positive or negative; our evaluations are often mixed, consisting of both positive and negative reactions.

A very common object of ambivalence is food! Chronic dieters experience a conflict between two incompatible goals: on one hand, they enjoy food and love to eat (the eating enjoyment goal); on the other, in line with societal demands on slimness, they want to lose weight (weight loss or control goal). As a result, they experience difficulty reducing their calorie intake, because eating enjoyment, as an affective reaction, is usually the food reaction to food stimuli. Don't you go glassy-eyed and look longingly at chocolate cakes?

Attitude ambivalence occurs when there is evaluative tension associated with one's attitude because the summary includes both positive and negative evaluations. This is manifested in the person feeling *mixed* or *torn* about the attitude object. Attitude ambivalence may also be the result of conflicting values. For e.g. you may have an ambivalent attitude towards arranged marriages, because on one hand you value obedience and adherence to parents; on the other, you may value freedom and personal choice.

There is some evidence that as attitude ambivalence increases, attitude-behaviour consistency decreases (for e.g. Conner et al., 2003). Further, ambivalent attitudes are less accessible than non ambivalent ones. Individuals may recognize the underlying conflict associated with their attitudes and thus be less sure of their validity. This may lead people to conclude that they should try to avoid use of attitude. Higher ambivalence is also related to less extreme attitudes. As a matter of fact, research on attitude ambivalence originally came from interest in individuals who held neutral positions on some attitudes.

Research also shows that there are individual differences associated with the tendency for ambivalence. Individuals with high need for cognition (who enjoy effortful cognitive processing and those who dislike ambiguity) tend to have lower levels of ambivalence than individuals lower on need for cognition.

Self Check Exercises

Note: Tick mark the correct answer.

Check your answer with the answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) You have just watched a movie featuring young, slim girls. As you walk out of the theater into the shopping mall, you notice a treadmill and go and buy it. Your purchase behaviour has been influenced by which property of the attitude:
 - (a) Attitude intensity (b) Attitude ambivalence (c) Attitude accessibility (d) Attitude origin

- 2) You are out for a dinner with friends when the host asks you if you would like to eat some dessert, you politely decline. When another friend's ice cream arrives, you look at it wistfully. When your friend urges you to have some, you say, 'I would love to. But I would feel very guilty in the morning if I give in to my temptation now'. This is known as:
 - (a) Attitude intensity (b) Attitude ambivalence (c) Attitude accessibility (d) Attitude origin

2.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed the components of attitudes. Attitudes can be described in terms of three basic components: affect (feelings), behaviour (or at least behavioural intentions), and cognition (thoughts, beliefs, opinions, etc.). Though most attitudes have all three components, they can be more strongly rooted in either the cognitive or the affective component. All three components may not always be present in an attitude.

Attitudes have several dynamic properties that have implications for information processing, retrieval and behaviour. Three such properties are attitude strength, attitude accessibility and attitude ambivalence.

2.5 SAQS- POSSIBLE ANSWERS

- 1) b: Cognitive
- 2) a: Affective
- 3) c: Behavioural
- 4) c: Attitude accessibility
- 5) b: Attitude ambivalence

2.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

What are the three basic components of attitudes? Will all three aspects always be present in an attitude? Discuss with the help of an example.

Explain the dimensions of attitude strength. Give a real life example of an attitude that you hold strongly.

Define attitude accessibility. What are some implications of attitude accessibility?

What is attitude ambivalence? Briefly explain the relation between attitude accessibility and ambivalence.

2.7 GLOSSARY

- Attitude accessibility** : How quickly an attitude is activated from memory.
- Attitude ambivalence** : The ratio of positive and negative evaluations that make up that attitude
- Attitude extremity** : The intensity of feeling on the object of the attitude.
- Attitude strength** : In its most general sense, it may be viewed as the extent to which an individual's attitude is formed.
- Cognition** : A faculty for the processing of information, applying knowledge, and changing preferences.

2.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

Albarracin, D., Johnson, B.T., & Zanna, M.P. (2005). *The Handbook of Attitudes*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Baron, R. A., Branscombe, N. R., & Byrne, D. (2009). *Social Psychology*, 12th Ed. Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

UNIT 3 PREDICTING BEHAVIOUR FROM ATTITUDE

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Relationship between Attitude and Behaviour
- 3.3 Attitudes Predict Behaviour
 - 3.3.1 True Versus Expressed Attitudes
 - 3.3.2 One Instance Versus Aggregate
 - 3.3.3 Level of Attitude-behaviour Specificity
 - 3.3.4 Self Awareness
 - 3.3.5 Attitude Strength
 - 3.3.6 Attitude Accessibility
- 3.4 Attitudes Determine Behaviour?
- 3.5 Behaviour Determine Attitudes
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- 3.6 Behaviour and Moral Attitudes
- 3.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.8 SAQs: Possible Answers
- 3.11 Unit End Questions
- 3.10 Glossary
- 3.11 Suggested Readings

3.0 INTRODUCTION

As you have seen in the previous units, every day we constantly form and use attitudes. You have probably formed an attitude about this topic and me as the author, and the use of that attitude may affect whether or not you choose to study this unit or leave it. But, wait a minute. Does it really? May be not. Because if you want to prepare well for your examination and score well, perhaps you will study regardless of your attitude. In other words, even if you may have formed a negative attitude towards this unit (I certainly hope that's not the case), your behaviour may not reflect your attitude. In this unit, we will examine the complex relationship between attitudes and behaviour. Attitude and behaviour represent the classic chicken-and-egg case. What came first? The chicken or the egg? What comes first? The attitude or the behavior? We will attempt to find answers to such questions in this unit.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the inconsistency in the attitude-behaviour relationship;

- Describe the factors that determine the attitude-behaviour relationship;
- Explain the theory of planned behaviour that explains how attitudes determine behaviour; and
- List the instances where behaviour determines attitudes.

3.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR

Attitudes were the corner stone of social psychology, right from its inception. Much of the interest in attitudes came from the commonsensical belief that attitudes determine behaviour, and behaviour after all, was the subject matter of psychology. In fact, the earliest definitions defined attitudes largely in terms of behaviour. For e.g. Allport (1924) defined attitudes as tendencies or predispositions to behave in certain ways in social situations. Jung (1971) similarly defined an attitude as “a readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way” (p. 687). It turned out that this ‘common sense’ was actually ‘uncommon’. Despite intuitive belief that attitudes determine behaviour, a large body of early research indicated that attitudes are actually poor predictors of behaviour.

Let us look at some earliest researches that shook this faith. One of the earliest classic studies to examine the relationship between attitudes and behaviour was by LaPiere (1934). He spent two years traveling around the United States with a young Chinese couple, at a time when prejudice against the Chinese was quite open. During this travel, only one out of 184 hotels and restaurants refused them service. However, when he wrote back to them after the trip and asked if they would offer service to Chinese visitors, 91% of the 128 who responded said that they would refuse service to Chinese! LaPiere concluded that there is a sizeable gap between what people say and what they do—an inconsistency between attitudes and behaviour.

A few decades later, Wicker (1969) in his seminal review of attitude-behavior studies also found a lack of correspondence between expressed attitudes and behaviour. Wicker found that the correlation between attitude and behaviour in several domains rarely exceeded 0.30 and was often close to zero. He found that:

- Student attitudes toward cheating had little relation to the likelihood of their actual cheating;
- Attitudes toward the church were only modestly linked with actual church attendance on any given Sunday; and
- Self-described racial attitudes were unrelated to behaviour in actual situations.

Wicker went on to say that the field had been largely wasting its time on attitudes, because they do not strongly influence overt behaviour. Subsequent work over next 35 years did little better. Our attitudes often do exert important effects on our behaviour. For e.g. if you like Aamir Khan very much, chances are that you would’ve watched every movie of his. A better question, then is, when do attitudes determine behaviour or influence behaviour? Answer to this question is given in the following paragraphs.

3.3 ATTITUDES PREDICT BEHAVIOUR

Let us take up the question as to when do attitudes predict behaviour and then turn our attention towards the various factors that determine the attitude-behaviour relationship. To put succinctly, some of the factors that are instrumental in making attitude predict behaviour are:

- i) True versus expressed attitudes
- ii) One instance versus aggregate
- iii) Level of attitude behaviour specificity.

The above are discussed in detail below:

3.3.1 True Versus Expressed Attitudes

Very often one does come across a person saying something which does not express the person's held attitude. As mentioned elsewhere, in the context of many others watching the person or when a person against whom a negative attitude is held is the person's boss, true attitude will not be expressed. Thus a measured or expressed attitude may not be a person's true attitude especially when dealing with sensitive issues, contexts and situations. In order to find out the true attitude in such situations, a technique called "the bogus pipeline" is used, in which every attempt is made to convince the person who holds an attitude that there is a machine which would definitely measure the true attitude. If the person is convinced that his / her attitude would anyway be revealed by the machine, he/she may tell the truth and thus their true attitudes will be more consistent with their behaviour.

There is yet another technique that is used to get at the true attitude held by a person and this is called the implicit association test, uses reaction times to measure how quickly people associate a certain concept related to the true attitude. In this technique if a person has a negative attitude towards a certain community persons, many words are selected that are related to that community persons. These words are mixed with many other unrelated words and the individual is asked to respond with their attitude towards each of these words. The time between presenting the word and the time the individual responds called as the reaction time is noted. If the reaction time to certain words associated with particular community persons is observed to be longer than to other words, then it may be assumed that the person does have a negative attitude towards that community. Only when true attitudes are measured using such techniques will they be predictive of behaviour.

Activity:

Test yourself for hidden racial or gender biases with the help of the implicit association test by logging on to <http://www.understandingprejudice.org/iat/index2.htm>. You can take either the race test or the gender test and may end up being surprised by the results!

3.3.2 One Instance Versus Aggregate

Consider this. Sachin Tendulkar's career batting average is 55.56 (1989–2010, 166 Tests, 13,447 runs). Does that mean he will score 55 runs in every inning? Not at all. How much he will score in a particular game is nearly impossible to

predict, because it is affected by many factors such as the pitch, weather conditions, bowler he is facing, and so on (I'm not an expert in cricket, you may know this better than I do!).

The point is simply this: predicting people's behaviour from their attitudes is like predicting a cricket player's hitting. Just as we can predict the approximate batting average of Sachin Tendulkar (but not individual game), similarly averaging many occasions would enable us to detect more clearly the impact of our attitudes. For e.g. research shows that people's general attitude towards religion poorly predicts whether they will go and worship next weekend. That's because the weather, their mood, their health, how far the temple is from residence, alternative plans, etc. also influence attendance. However, religious attitudes do predict quite well the total quantity of religious behaviours over time (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1974). This is known as the principle of aggregation: the effects of an attitude become more apparent when we look at a person's aggregate or average behaviour rather than at an individual act.

3.3.3 Level of Attitude-behaviour Specificity

Too often in the past, researchers (e.g. Wicker, 1969) investigated correlations between very broad and general issues like discrimination and a specific behaviour such as taking a picture with an Afro-American. Attitude specificity, the extent to which attitudes are focused on specific objects or situations (e.g. 'Do you like to eat Mexican food?') rather than on general ones (e.g. 'Do you like to go out to eat?') is clearly an important factor in the attitude-behaviour link. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1977), every single instance of behaviour involves four specific elements: target, action, time and context. According to the principle of compatibility, measures of attitude and behaviour are compatible to the extent that these elements are assessed at identical levels of generality or specificity.

Target: I might have favourable attitudes toward the environment, but have a negative attitude toward carrying paper bags because I find polythene bags more convenient. In LaPiere's case, the respondents may have viewed the target as a devious oriental, rather than a well-dressed, soft-spoken oriental couple traveling with a White man.

Action: I might support somebody's right to have an abortion, while being opposed to having an abortion myself.

Context: I might support the right to have an abortion under certain circumstances (save the life of the mother, rape, or other tragic circumstances) while being opposed to it in others.

Time: It might be all right for me to drink at night or on the weekends, but not in the morning.

Thus, attitudes can predict behaviour if you both attitudes and behaviours are measured at similar levels of specificity. For instance, Davidson and Jaccard (1979) analysed correlations between married women's attitudes towards birth control and their actual use of oral contraceptives during the two years following the study. When 'attitude towards birth control' was used as the attitude measure, the correlation was 0.08, indicating low correspondence. But when 'attitudes towards oral contraceptives' were measured, the correlation rose to 0.32, and

when ‘attitudes towards using oral contraceptives’ were measured, the correlation rose still further to 0.53. Finally, when ‘attitudes towards using oral contraceptives during the next two years’ was used, it rose still further to 0.57. Clearly, the more specific the question, the higher was the correspondence with behaviour.

3.3.4 Self Awareness

Another aspect that influences behaviour is the self awareness, that is, how far the individual is aware of the attitudes that he or she holds. So long as persons are not aware of their attitudes, these attitudes will tend to influence the individuals’ behaviours all the more intensely. On the other hand if an individual is aware of his attitude, he or she will be quite self-conscious about it and may hesitate showing it in their behaviours. Also when people are more attentive of their own behaviour, and presumably of their internal States, their attitude behaviour congruency increases. People who are self-conscious are usually in touch with their attitudes. One way of making people self-conscious is to have them act in front of a mirror (Carver & Scheier, 1981). Making people self-aware in this way promotes consistency between words and deeds.

Thus, attitudes are more likely to guide behaviour if they are made salient (e.g. ask people to consider their attitudes, make them more conscious of their attitudes).

3.3.5 Attitude Strength

By now you should be able to guess that the stronger the attitudes are, the greater their impact on behaviour. We saw in Unit 2 that attitude strength involves several dimensions, such as how much the individual knows about the attitude object (certainty), the intensity of the attitude (how strong is the emotional reaction provoked by the attitude object), how the attitude was formed in the first place (origin), and the extent to which the person is personally affected by the attitude (importance). Thus, thinking more about something often results in greater attitude-behaviour consistency. Attitudes formed through direct experience are stronger, and as a result, are better predictors of later behaviour. The attitudes of more personally involved individuals will be stronger predictors of behaviour than attitudes of the less involved.

3.3.6 Attitude Accessibility

You may recall from the previous unit that attitude accessibility refers to the ease with which attitudes can be retrieved from memory. Most modern theories agree that attitudes are represented in memory, and that attitudes that are more accessible from memory are more predictive of behaviour. According to Fazio (1990), more accessible attitudes can be spontaneously and automatically activated without our conscious awareness, and can guide our behaviour without us being necessarily aware of them.

By definition, strong attitudes exert more influence over behaviour, because they can be automatically activated. One factor that seems to be important here is direct experience. For example, Fazio and Zanna (1978) found that measures of students’ attitudes towards psychology experiments were better predictors of their future participation if they had already taken part in several experiments than if they had only read about them (remember the mere exposure effect that we studied in Unit 2).

3.4 ATTITUDES DETERMINE BEHAVIOUR

The most comprehensive answer to this puzzling question first came from the theory of reasoned action proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). They suggested that behaviour is primarily a function of an intention to carry out a particular act. These intentions, in turn are determined by two factors: the attitude towards the behaviour and the subjective norm. The attitude is a function of belief about consequences and subjective evaluation of those consequences. Subjective norm, on the other hand, is a person's perception of whether others will approve of the particular behaviour.

In a later modification of this theory, known as the theory of planned behaviour, Ajzen, 1991) added a third factor that leads to behavioural intention: perceived behavioural control (Refer Figure 3.1). Perceived behavioural control refers to people's appraisals of their ability to perform the behaviour in question. As a general rule, the more favourable the attitude and subjective norm, and the greater the perceived control, the stronger should be the person's intention to perform the behaviour in question.

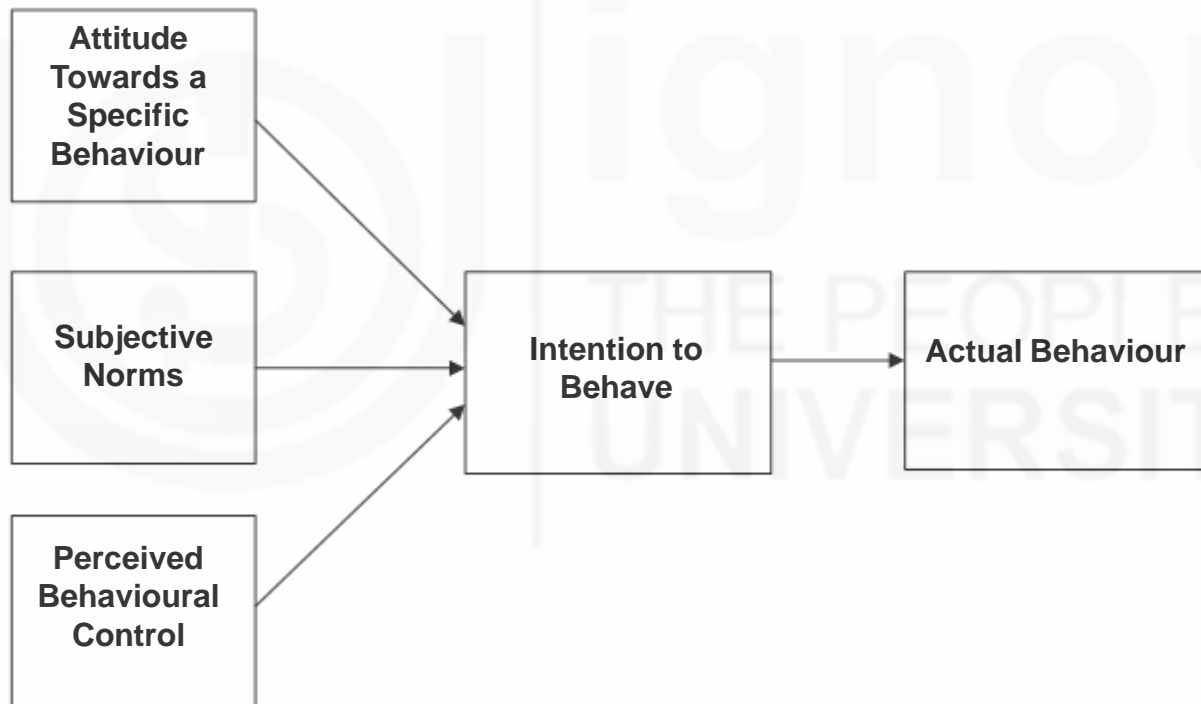


Fig. 3.1: Theory of Planned Behaviour (Adapted from Baron & Byrne, 2003, p. 133)

Let us use an example to explain this theory. Rahul believes that smoking causes cancer and that cancer is very bad (therefore he has a negative attitude towards smoking). His fiancée wants him to quit smoking and he would like to please her (subjective norm for smoking is low). He however realizes that this habit is deeply ingrained and lacks confidence in his ability to become a nonsmoker (low perceived behavioural control). Thus, despite his proper attitude and the subjective norm, Rahul is unlikely to quit smoking.

It is also true that at times subjective norms will determine our intentions. Even if we dislike something, we may do it anyway, because of subjective norms (think of peer pressure). For instance, even if Rahul had a negative attitude toward

smoking, had the will power to quit (high behavioural control), but thought that his friends expect him to smoke and he wanted to please his friends (high subjective norm towards smoking), he would have probably not have an intention to quit smoking (at least with his friends, I am not sure what he would do in front of his fiancée!).

This model has been quite accurate in relating attitudes to behaviour in areas like voting, drug use, political and family planning behaviour. It is important to note that this model will be accurate only in explaining behaviour based on rational thinking and planning— hence the name ‘planned behaviour’.

The model has been criticized for suggesting that behavioural intentions are the only direct determinant of behaviour. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), effects of any other kind of attitude will only be indirect, and relationship with behaviour could be weak. This has, however, been questioned by critics. Many have found that feelings (the affective component of attitudes) may be a better predictor of what you will do than your intentions. Especially when intentions are weak or ill-formed and other beliefs are strong, affective attitudes may be the best predictor of behaviour. Often intentions are not even formed until immediately before behaving. Sometimes people act without thinking. Many habits for instance, not wearing seat belts, lowering the window of the car to throw a wrapper, etc. — are performed in a relatively unthinking manner, and thus are less influenced by conscious intentions. Some have even said that the relationship between attitudes and behaviour is backwards- behaviour influences attitudes, rather than the other way.

Self Check Exercises

Note: i) Write your answer in the space provide after each question.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of the unit.

Ravi believes that global warming is a serious issue. He thinks that global warming will lead to extreme weather events, temperature rise, rising sea levels and decreased snow cover. If policy makers do not address it urgently, the future will be very bleak for generations to come. He wants to use public transport in order to lower gas emissions, but feels that public transport is very crowded and inconvenient. None of his friends wants to use a car pool. He has been thinking of switching over to a car that uses some alternative fuel— CNG for instance, but doesn’t know how to go about it.

For the above, answer the following:

1) What is Ravi’s attitude towards global warming?

.....
.....
.....

2) What is the subjective norm towards car pool?

.....
.....
.....

3) What is the perceived behavioral control?
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4) What is Ravi's behaviour likely to be?
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3.5 BEHAVIOUR DETERMINES ATTITUDES

We shall now turn our attention to a seemingly surprising idea that behaviour determines attitudes. Consider this example. Suppose you went to watch a brainless comedy movie with your friends one evening. You thought that the gags were rather silly, but found your friends laughing. You also start laughing at some of the jokes in the movie. Later another friend who didn't go for the movie asked you how it was. You thought to yourself, 'Well, I did laugh at quite a few places. It must be funny after all' and you tell your friend 'It was good. You should've come'. This illustrates that at least in some circumstances, our behaviour determines our attitudes.

Let us now consider some such instances where behaviour does determine our attitudes.

3.5.1 Role Playing

The Oxford English Dictionary defines role-playing as "the changing of one's behaviour to fulfill a social role". The act of role playing often results in changing of the behaviour of the person who plays that role. Let us now consider a classic experiment led by Zimbardo and his team of researchers in 1971, known as the Stanford prison experiment that demonstrated the potent effect of role playing. Twenty-four undergraduate males were selected out of 70 (on the basis of their psychological stability and health) to play the role of either a guard or a prisoner in a mock prison in the basement of the Stanford psychology building. Roles were assigned based on a coin toss. Guards were given uniforms, batons, and whistles and were instructed to enforce the rules. The prisoners were locked in cells and made to wear humiliating outfits, complete with a chain around their ankles. Prisoners and guards rapidly adapted to their roles, stepping beyond the boundaries of what had been predicted and leading to dangerous and psychologically damaging situations. One-third of the guards exhibited sadistic tendencies, while many prisoners were emotionally traumatized and two had to be removed from the experiment early. The experiment had to be terminated

only six days after it began instead of the fourteen it was supposed to have lasted. Zimbardo concluded that both prisoners and guards had become too grossly absorbed in their roles—i.e. they internalized their roles. It seemed that the situation caused the participants' behaviour, rather than anything inherent in their individual personalities.

Despite severe criticisms of the experiment as being unethical and unscientific, it did demonstrate an important finding: behaviours (such as playing a role) can quickly lead to attitudes. The effect of behaviour on attitude appears even in theatre. The actor, at times becomes so absorbed in his role that he experiences genuine emotions of the character that he is playing.

3.5.2 Foot in the Door Phenomenon

'Papa, can I go over to Sunita's house for an hour?' After your father agrees, you follow your request with (either after some time or after you have already gone to Sunita's house), 'Can I please stay the night? Sunita is really insisting'. Interestingly (and your father may not know this), but you have already carried your nightclothes for the sleep over! If you have ever used this kind of technique, you would know that it is quite an effective tactic. Known as foot in the door technique, this involves getting the person to agree to a large request by first setting them up by having that person agree to a modest request. This technique works on the principle of consistency: once we have said yes to a small request, we are more likely to say yes to subsequent and larger ones too, because refusing them would be inconsistent with our previous behaviour. In other words, your initial behaviour affects your attitude and affects subsequent behaviour!

3.6 BEHAVIOUR AND MORAL ATTITUDES

Actions also affect our moral attitudes— both negative and positive. Evil sometimes results from gradually escalating commitments. In concentration camps, for example, guards made to engage in cruel acts may be initially uncomfortable, but later justify their behaviour.

Consider one of the most serious conflicts of our times: the Israel-Palestine conflict. It may be argued that by legally engaging in discriminatory acts towards Palestinians (for e.g. different roads for Jews and Palestinians, differential access to water and other resources), Israelis have started believing that the 'sleazy, corrupt, and inferior Orientals' deserve it. The earlier Zionist leaders 'believed' that the expulsion of the Palestinians was moral, ethical, and good for them.

Fortunately, the reverse is also true. Positive interracial behaviour has also been found to reduce racial prejudice. For e.g. greater intergroup contact typically corresponds with lower levels of intergroup prejudice. A meta-analysis of 516 studies (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) obtained a mean effect size between contact and prejudice of $r = -.21$. It also found that 95% of the 516 studies report a negative relationship between contact and prejudices of many types. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) reasoned that contact reduces prejudice by (1) enhancing knowledge about the out-group; (2) reducing anxiety about intergroup contact; and (3) increasing empathy and perspective taking. Clearly, then whether good or bad, attitudes have followed behaviour. As Myers (2005) says, "We not only stand up for what we believe in, we also believe in what we have stood up for" (p. 150).

A number of theories have been proposed to help explain this attitude-follows-behaviour phenomenon. We shall discuss them in the next unit.

3.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed the complex relationship between attitudes and behaviour. Despite intuitive belief that attitudes determine behaviour, a large body of early research (LaPiere, 1934; Wicker, 1969 among others) indicated that attitudes are actually poor predictors of behaviour. Later research, however, indicated that there are several factors that determine when attitudes will predict behaviour. Such factors are (1) when true attitudes rather than expressed attitudes are measured; (2) when we look at a person's aggregate or average behaviour rather than at an individual act; (3) when attitudes and behaviour are measured at similar levels of specificity; (4) when individuals are self aware; (5) when attitudes are strongly held; and (6) when attitudes are easily accessible from memory. The theory of planned behaviour explains how attitudes determine behaviour through behavioural intentions.

An alternate view is that our behaviour determines our attitudes, at least in some circumstances. Such circumstances include role playing, the foot in the door phenomenon, and moral attitudes. The attitude-follows-behaviour principle works with both immoral and positive moral acts.

3.8 SAQS-POSSIBLE ANSWERS

- 1) Ravi has a negative attitude towards global warming, because he believes that global warming will lead to extreme weather events, temperature rise, rising sea levels and decreased snow cover (cognitive component).
- 2) The subjective norm for using car pools is low because none of his friends want to use it.
- 3) The perceived behavioural control is low because Ravi doesn't know how or where to get CNG fitted in his car.
- 4) Despite his negative attitude towards global warming and positive attitudes towards environmental protection measures (such as using car pools or alternative fuels), his behaviour is likely to be unchanged. He may continue to use his own car for travelling, contributing to global warming.

3.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Is it fair to say that attitudes and behaviour are completely unrelated? Discuss.
- 2) Examine the factors that might help improve the attitude-behaviour relationship.
- 3) Explain the theory of planned behaviour with the help of one real life example.
- 4) Do you recall a time when taking an action changed your attitude? Describe the experience underlining the psychological processes involved in it.

3.10 GLOSSARY

- Behavioural intentions** : The conscious decisions to carry out a specific action.
- Intergroup contact hypothesis** : Under appropriate conditions, one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members is through interpersonal contact (Allport, 1954).
- Meta analysis** : A statistical procedure for combining the results of several independent studies in order to estimate the integrated effect of variables across these studies.
- Prejudice** : A negative attitude towards members of a particular group formed beforehand or without knowledge of facts.
- Role** : A set of norms that define how people in a given social position should behave.

3.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

Myers, D. G. (2010). *Social Psychology*, 10th Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.

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UNIT 4 EFFECTING ATTITUDINAL CHANGE AND COGNITIVE DISSONANCE THEORY, COMPLIANCE OF SELF-PERCEPTION THEORY, SELF-AFFIRMATION

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Self Presentation
- 4.3 Cognitive Dissonance
- 4.4 Cognitive Dissonance and Attitude Change
- 4.5 Self Perception
- 4.6 Self Affirmation
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Unit End Questions
- 4.9 Glossary
- 4.10 Suggested Readings and References

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit we examined the relationship between attitudes and behaviour. We saw that not only do attitudes determine behaviour, but in some circumstances, our behaviour too determines our attitudes. Let us now look at some theories that explain why and how our behaviour affects our attitudes. In this unit, we will examine four such theories: self presentation theory, cognitive dissonance theory, self-perception theory, self affirmation theory. When you have finished reading this unit, you should have some understanding of why we modify or form our attitudes (some at least) in order to maintain consistency with our actions.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Know the theory of self presentation. In terms of impression management , how to use verbal and non verbal cues and the types of self presentation instrumental and expressive;
- Describe the theory of cognitive dissonance, the process and how it creates an imbalance etc.;
- Explain how cognitive dissonance effects attitude change;
- Describe how self-presentation theory explains attitude formation; and
- Know how self affirmations enable people to maintain the integrity of the self.

4.2 SELF PRESENTATION

Some time back I was invited by a school to deliver a talk on promoting environmental consciousness on World Environment Day. I wore a green cotton sari, carried a folder of recycled paper and travelled in metro (instead of my car) to the school. A part of why I did so was because I am fairly environment friendly, but another important reason was that I wanted others to see my actions consistent with my words.

The process mentioned above is self presentation (also called impression management). It may be defined as the organisation of the presenting person's *cues* so as to elicit desired responses in others (Goffman, 1959). These cues may be verbal, nonverbal (posture, gesture, eye gaze, etc.), stylistic (use of clothing, arrangement of hair, household or even decorative items with which one surrounds oneself, and even type of people with which one surrounds oneself). Goffman uses the metaphor of the actor in a theater to explain this. An actor performs on a stage with a back drop; the props direct his action; he is being watched by an audience; but at the same time he is an audience for his viewers' play. Any individual, as a social actor, has the ability to choose his stage, props, and costume he would put on in front of a specific audience. The actor's main goal is to adjust to the different settings offered to him and to create impressions that reflect well upon him.

There are two main motives of self-presentation (Schlenker, 1980): (i) Instrumental and (ii) Expressive. Let us see what these are.

- i) **Instrumental:** We want to influence others and gain rewards. For instance, we like to dress up very well and would like to be commented favourably about it. Some will read up the latest in the field in which he or she is involved so that they would talk about it and impress others as to how knowledgeable he or she is. They hope to be complemented for their knowledge. In a negative sense, we do try to impress others by flattering them or threatening them so as to make them complement us and allow us to be part of their group. In certain other cases the person shows his vulnerability and supplication by agreeing to do whatever the others ask so that they allow the person to be retained on their company. Thus there are many ways in which we try to impress others in order to gain some positive strokes or rewards from others about whom we care and whose company we want to continually keep.
- ii) **Expressive:** We construct an image of ourselves to claim personal identity, and present ourselves in a manner that is consistent with that image. For example, image building by politicians who try to express what they are and what all they can achieve and how they would achieve and how caring they are about people's concerns and greeting people on all festivals to show that they care etc. Here the main motive is expressive motive. Through expressing themselves they also act accordingly by putting up posters and hoardings about how they greet people on festivals and also organise groups and talk in groups about their plans and actions. There are others who use certain status symbols such as "khadi kurta pajama" a sort of dress that Indian politicians wear showing how they all are similar to the common man, and convey the impression that they belong to this group and that others should recognise them as belonging to that group.

These types of using status symbols and behaving in a certain manner in line with the image building, in course of time build in them the needed attitudes that go in line with the expressive motive. It is in this sense one can understand how one's actions affect attitudes. To look inconsistent would be to look foolish. To avoid being treated differently, we express attitudes that matches our actions, even if it means displaying a little hypocrisy. Impression management theory states that individuals must establish and maintain impressions that are congruent with the perceptions they want to convey to others. The others' perceptions of you then become the reality from which they form ideas and the basis for intended behaviours.

As you might expect there are several factors affecting impression management, including individual differences in self-monitoring (the process through which people regulate their own behaviour in order to be perceived by others in a favourable manner) and self verification (the act of conforming the audience to the person's self-concept).

Clearly then, the explanation of self presentation does not explain all instances where attitudes follow behaviour. This is particularly true for those who express their changed attitudes even without knowing how they have behaved; and those who internalize their self-presentations as genuine attitude changes. Let us consider other competing explanations that address this.

4.3 COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

One of the most influential approaches in social psychology having far reaching implications is that human beings have a tendency to seek consistency in one's cognitions (attitudes, beliefs, self-perceptions). First introduced by Heider (1946), this principle of cognitive consistency implies that our attitudes change because we are motivated to maintain consistency among our cognitions.

This seemingly simple cognitive dissonance theory was proposed by Festinger (1957). According to Festinger, we feel tension ('dissonance') when we become aware of two simultaneous inconsistent cognitions. In order to reduce this unpleasant arousal, we often adjust our thinking.

The classical example of cognitive dissonance can be found in the Aesop fable *The Fox and the Grapes*, in which a fox sees some high-hanging grapes and wishes to eat them. After several failed attempts at reaching the grapes, he decides that the grapes are probably not worth eating anyway (that they are not yet ripe or that they are too sour).

Dissonance theory addresses the discrepancies between behaviour and attitudes. We are aware of both. Hence, if we sense some hypocrisy, we feel pressure for change. In a classic experiment done by Festinger and Carlsmith (1959), students were asked to spend an hour on boring and tedious tasks (e.g. turning wooden knobs again and again). The tasks were designed to generate a strong, negative attitude. After the subjects had finished, the experimenters asked some of them to do a 'simple favour'. They were asked to talk to the next subject (actually the experimenter's assistant) and lie that the tasks were interesting and that he will enjoy it. Some participants were paid \$20 (a huge amount back in 1959) for this, another group was paid \$1, and a control group was not asked to perform the favour. In the end, the subjects were asked to actually rate the boring tasks.

What do you think the results were? Answer the sentence given below as true/false:

The group that was paid \$20 for lying thought that the tasks were more interesting than those paid \$1. (True or False)

If you thought the above was true, you are wrong! Contrary to operant conditioning principles that big rewards produce big effects, those in the \$1 group rated the task more positively than those in the \$20 and control groups. This was explained by Festinger and Carlsmith as evidence for cognitive dissonance: 'I told someone that the task was interesting', and 'I actually found it boring.' When paid only \$1, students were forced to internalize the attitude they were induced to express, because it is unpleasant to say something that you don't feel. Those in the \$20 condition, however, had an obvious external justification for their behaviour ('I lied because I was paid \$20 to lie'), and thus experienced less dissonance. People paid only small amounts of money have less justification for their inconsistency, tend to experience more dissonance, and hence change their attitudes more. This is referred to as the less-leads-to-more effect.

In 1969, Aronson reformulated the basic theory by linking it to one's self concept. According to this interpretation, cognitive dissonance does not arise because people experience dissonance between contradictory cognitions. Instead, it occurs when people see their actions as conflicting with their normally positive view of themselves. Thus, in the original Festinger and Carlsmith study, the dissonance was between the cognition, 'I am an honest person' and the cognition, 'I lied to someone about finding the task interesting'.

One real life example of cognitive dissonance is smoking. It is widely accepted that cigarettes can cause lung cancer, yet virtually everyone wants to live a long and healthy life. The desire to live a long life is dissonant with the activity of doing something that will most likely shorten one's life. Smokers therefore should experience tension produced by these contradictory ideas. Such tension can be reduced by quitting smoking, denying the evidence of lung cancer ('only very heavy smokers get lung cancer'; 'my chances of dying in a road accident are higher than that of dying from lung cancer' etc.), or justifying one's smoking ('It helps me control my weight'). Because it is often easier to make excuses than it is to change behaviour, dissonance theory leads to the conclusion that humans *rationalize* rather than be *rational*.

Dissonance theory has implications for parenting. It suggests that parents should aim to elicit desired behaviour without threats, thus motivating children to internalize the appropriate attitudes: 'I am not watching television because it's more interesting to play outside' as opposed to 'I am not watching television because my father will punish me if I do so'.

Another implication of the dissonance theory is after making decisions- post decision dissonance. Let's say you bought an expensive pair of sunglasses from a store. You are feeling very happy because this is what you wanted to buy for a long time. After buying it, you see a similar pair in another shop, priced at almost half the price you paid for it. What would you feel now? If you feel upset or anxious, you are experiencing post decision dissonance, dissonance experienced after making a decision regarding the possibility of it being wrong. So what do

you do to reduce this dissonance? You might *rationalize* and change your perceptions: find additional reasons or justifications to support your choice and make your decision seem more attractive (assuming that the shop will not permit any return or exchange). You might decide that your sunglasses are better— ‘the two are not really the same’, ‘the second shop might be selling fake sunglasses, mine are real branded’ etc. This may not be true, but it would make you feel better. After making important decisions, we usually reduce dissonance by upgrading the chosen alternative and downgrading the unchosen one.

Some research suggests that dissonance can be used to generate hypocrisy as a powerful tool for beneficial changes in people’s behaviour. When people fail to practice what they preach, their act of hypocrisy can induce cognitive dissonance and the motivation to change their behaviour. This has been demonstrated in several areas regarding health and safety. For instance, Stone et al. (1997) asked participants to prepare a videotape regarding the use of condoms to prevent transmission of HIV. They were then asked to think about reasons as to why they hadn’t used condoms in the past. When participants were brought face to face with their own hypocrisy, it was found that they engaged in direct means of reducing hypocrisy (by purchasing condoms at a lower price). Thus dissonance induced through hypocrisy can result in change in behaviour- for the better.

One important caveat: cultural factors influence the operation of cognitive dissonance. Although dissonance occurs all around the world, it is less likely to influence attitudes in collectivistic cultures like ours as compared to individualistic cultures like the United States. After all, if your marriage is based on your parent’s choice, and you are not happy, you can say to yourself ‘I didn’t like him in the first place. He was my parent’s choice’ as opposed to where your marriage is based on personal choice. In case of latter, the possibility of making an incorrect decision is perceived more as a threat to one’s own self: ‘How could *I* be so stupid?’ as opposed to ‘How could *my parents* be so stupid?’ Thus, the desire to engage in cognitively consistent actions may not be uniform across cultures.

Self Assessment Questions

What do you understand by the term cognitive dissonance?

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What was the experiment conducted by Festinger and colleagues in regard to demonstrating cognitive dissonance? What was the result and why?

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4.4 COGNITIVE DISSONANCE AND ATTITUDE CHANGE

Attitudes as mentioned earlier are indeed difficult to change. But there are many ways in which attitudes could also be changed. Many studies as for example that of Veen et al (2009), demonstrated that attitude change also shows in the neural changes. They found that when the person's actions conflict with the prior attitudes, these often change the persons attitudes to be more consistent with their actions. This phenomenon, known as cognitive dissonance, is considered to be one of the most influential theories in psychology. Using a Solomon four-group design, they scanned participants with functional MRI while the subjects argued that the uncomfortable scanner environment was nevertheless a pleasant experience. They found that cognitive dissonance engaged the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex and anterior insula; They also reported that the activation of these regions tightly predicted participants' subsequent attitude change. These effects were not observed in a control group. Their findings elucidate the neural representation of cognitive dissonance, and support the role of the anterior cingulate cortex in detecting cognitive conflict and the neural prediction of attitude change.

According to Festinger's theory, there are basically two factors that affect the strength of the dissonance, viz., (i) the number of dissonant beliefs, and (ii) the importance attached to each belief.

Hence one can eliminate dissonance by the following methods:

- 1) reduce the importance of the dissonant beliefs
- 2) add more consonant beliefs that outweigh the dissonant beliefs.
- 3) change the dissonant beliefs so that they are no longer inconsistent.

As mentioned earlier, Dissonance occurs when an individual has to make a choice between two incompatible beliefs or actions. The dissonance created is very high when the two alternatives are equally attractive. This is akin to approach – approach conflict which creates considerable tension. Attitude change is more likely in the direction of less incentive as this results in lower dissonance. These explanations could be very effectively used in attitude formation and change.

In regard to changing of attitude towards a certain community people, the integrated housing scheme provides a good example of application of cognitive dissonance. When people start living together, and have to interact with each other for various reasons, they get to know each other and many ideas and beliefs about the other person belonging to a certain community start changing considerably as experience shows that these people are not as the individual thought them to be. In course of time with the changes in beliefs and ideas getting stronger the individual is able to get over the negative attitude and change to a more positive attitude. This is one way of changing attitude. Here dissonance is created by facts and figures and the individual reduces the dissonance by changing his attitude.

To cite another example, consider someone who buys an expensive car but discovers that it is not comfortable on long drives. Dissonance exists between their beliefs that they have bought a good car and that a good car should be

comfortable. Dissonance could be eliminated by deciding that it does not matter since the car is mainly used for short trips (reducing the importance of the dissonant belief) or focusing on the car's strengths such as safety, appearance, handling (thereby adding more consonant beliefs). The dissonance could also be eliminated by getting rid of the car, but this behaviour is a lot harder to achieve than changing beliefs.

Thus the two most important principles of cognitive dissonance can be stated as that (i) dissonance occurs when a person has to choose between contradictory attitudes and behaviour. (ii) Another principle is that the dissonance can be removed by changing the importance of conflicting beliefs and acquiring new beliefs that change the balance or remove the conflicting attitude or remove the conflicting behaviour.

4.5 SELF PERCEPTION

According to Wikipedia, Self-perception theory (SPT) is an account of attitude change developed by psychologist Daryl Bem. It asserts that people develop their attitudes by observing their behaviour and concluding what attitudes must have caused them. The theory is counterintuitive in nature, as the conventional wisdom is that attitudes come prior to behaviours. According to this theory, attitudes come about without accessing the internal cognition and moods. The person logically reasons out and explains their overt behaviours rationally in the same way they attempt to explain others' behaviours. Bem was an early critic of cognitive dissonance theory. He proposed self-perception theory as an alternative explanation of the results of Festinger and Carlsmith's (1959) study. In other words, people form and develop attitudes by observing their own behaviour, much as they use other people's behaviour to infer what their underlying attitudes are.

Applying this principle to the Festinger and Carlsmith study, Bem argued that the participants must be inferring their attitudes from their behaviour, without necessarily experiencing any dissonance. Thus, when asked 'Did you find the task interesting?' they decided that they must have found it interesting because that is what they told someone. To test this hypothesis, Bem (1967) presented participants a description of the original study (You would recall that a subject performed a boring task and then was paid either \$1 or \$20 to tell another that it was fun and interesting). He then asked the participants to guess the person's attitude towards the task. The participants did guess that subjects in the \$1 condition would hold more of task being boring than those in the \$20 condition. Their reasons: the subject who was paid \$20 to say the task was interesting really was lying because he clearly did it for the money. However, the subject who was paid \$1 must have been honest, because such a small amount doesn't justify lying!

Thus, Bem's theory and Festinger's theory make identical predictions, but offer different explanations. Dissonance theory predicts the presence of unpleasant tension or arousal, while self-perception theory suggests that no negative drive state is involved in attitude formation—attitudes are inferred from behaviour rather than the other way around. While dissonance theory addresses attitude *change*, self-perception theory explains attitude *formation*. Dissonance theory explains what happens when we act contrary to clearly defined attitudes: we feel

an unpleasant tension, so we modify our attitudes to reduce it. In situations, where attitudes are not well formed, self-perception theory explains attitude formation. As we act and then reflect, we develop attitudes in line with our actions. A comparison between the two theories may be seen in Table 4.1 given below.

Table 4.1: Comparison between Cognitive Dissonance and Self Perception Theories

| Cognitive Dissonance Theory | Self Perception Theory |
|---|---|
| Attitudes directly known | Attitudes are inferred from behaviour |
| Unpleasant affect necessary for attitude formation | No unpleasant affect involved in attitude formation |
| Applicable when attitudes are clearly formed | Applicable when attitudes are weak or vague |
| Dissonance most likely when the attitude in question is important to the self or the attitude behavior discrepancy is substantial | Self perception of attitudes most likely when the attitude in question is less important to the self or the attitude behaviour discrepancy is small |

Whether cognitive dissonance or self-perception is a more useful theory has raised considerable debate. Based on a number of studies, it seems that both are correct, but in different situations. Aronson (1969) suggests that the cognitive dissonance theory explains attitude changes when people’s behaviours are inconsistent with their original attitudes which are clear and important to them; while the self-perception theory is used when those original attitudes are relatively unclear and less important to the self (Refer Table 1). Since a large proportion of our attitudes are vague, the self-perception theory is significant in interpreting one’s own attitudes. Finally, it has also been demonstrated that both cognitive dissonance and self-perception could co-exist (Fazio, Zanna, & Cooper, 1977).

Numerous studies support the self-perception theory, demonstrating that emotions do follow behaviours. For example, when Laird (1974) asked college students to enact different facial expressions, gazes and postures (to approximate happiness, sorrow, anger, etc.), they did *feel* corresponding emotions. In the end of the experiment, subjects inferred and reported their affections and attitudes from their practiced behaviours, despite being previously told to act that way. This is also consistent with the James-Lange theory of emotion: first we act, and then the acting creates the feeling. We feel angry because we scowl; we feel sad because we cry, and so on. Based on findings like these, Duclos et al. (1989) proposed the facial feedback hypothesis. This view holds that people’s emotions— and thus their attitudes— can be manipulated by changing their facial expressions, body posture or other motor responses.

One interesting implication of the self perception theory is the overjustification effect: rewarding people for what they like doing anyway decreases their internal motivation for doing that task. According to the self-perception theory, people pay more attention to the incentive, and less attention to the enjoyment and satisfaction that they receive from performing the activity. An experiment to demonstrate this was done by Greene, Sternberg and Lepper (1976). They played

mathematical games with schoolchildren, which the children seemed to enjoy. After a while, they started giving rewards for success. When they took away the rewards, the children quickly gave up playing the games. Do you know why this happened? Because playing became less about 'fun' and more about 'work'.

Activity to do for the student

Try to recall a time when taking an action changed your attitude. Describe the experience. Think of a friend towards whom you have a slightly negative attitude and you would like to feel better about him/her. What action can you take now that will help you change the attitude?

4.6 SELF AFFIRMATION

Another interpretation of dissonance theory with a focus on one's self image is Steele's self affirmation theory. According to Steele (1988), people are motivated to maintain the integrity of the self. The ultimate goal of the self is to protect an image of its self-integrity, morality and adequacy. These two premises lead to two implications:

We experience a self-image threat, after acting in a manner inconsistent with our sense of honesty or integrity.

When our self concept is threatened, we often compensate by affirming another aspect of the self. In other words, we can reduce 'dissonance' by affirming our integrity in some other unrelated area of our lives.

As a result, these 'self-affirmations' enable people to deal with threatening events and information in a more open and even-handed manner, without resorting to defensive biases. For example, if you show me that I cannot sing, I'll go and dance even more, which I know I'm better at.

Besides reducing threats to the individual self, self-affirmations could also reduce threats to the self at a collective level, i.e. when people confront some threatening opinions or humiliating comments about the groups they belong to, such as nation or gender. For example, when someone says 'Women are lousy drivers as their spatial ability is inferior to men', I often cite evidence of women having better verbal and interpersonal abilities.

Individual and cultural differences have been reported in self-affirmations. For e.g. people with high and secure self esteem engage in less self-justification (Holland et al., 2002). People with high self-esteem are more likely to rely on self-affirmation than other defensive mechanism such as rationalisation. Culture also imposes some effect on the process of self-affirmation. In individualistic cultures, the self is more emphasized, and independence stands out; in collectivist cultures, kinship and interdependence are emphasized. Collectivists are less likely to be motivated to protect the self-integrity since self esteem is less emphasized in their culture.

There are numerous applications of this theory. The technique of self affirmation can also be used in multiple domains such as:

Personal relationship: When faced with an emotional upheaval in a personal relationship, the affirmation process can be done by writing down positive

statements about our partners, such as how they care about us and what we appreciate in them (Sherman & Cohen, 2006).

Health: Self-affirmation is an effective tool in health interventions. In a group-based cigarette cessation program for smokers, those who received a self-affirmation intervention had a lower defensiveness towards graphic cigarette warning labels than a control group. Moreover, these self-affirmed smokers also had a stronger intention to quit smoking (Harris et al., 2007).

Research has found that providing people with affirmation opportunities on alternative sources of self-integrity lead to a less biased evaluation to threatening information. Self-affirmation thus increases the openness of people to ideas that are difficult to accept.

4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed four possible reasons of why behaviour affects attitudes. Self presentation theory suggests that we express attitudes that make us appear consistent in order to fulfill two motives: instrumental and expressive. We establish and maintain impressions that are congruent with the perceptions we want to convey to others. This theory however does not explain genuine attitude change. The other theories propose that our actions trigger genuine attitude change, but offer different explanations of why this occurs.

Cognitive dissonance theory assumes that we justify our actions to ourselves because we want to reduce the discomfort experienced due to inconsistency between two or more of our attitudes or between our attitudes and our behaviour. Dissonance theory contends that attitude change is effected because people are motivated to reduce this unpleasant tension. Self-perception theory assumes that we form and develop attitudes by observing our own behaviour, in a similar way as we use other people's behaviour to infer what their underlying attitudes are. This is particularly true when our attitudes are weak and less important to the self. Self affirmation theory explains how we reduce the impact of a threat to our self-concept (after acting in a manner inconsistent with our sense of honesty or integrity) by focusing on and affirming our competence in some other area.

4.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What is meant by cognitive dissonance? How does it help to change attitudes?
- 2) What are the main tenets of self presentation theory?
- 3) Differentiate between cognitive dissonance theory and self perception theory.
- 4) Suppose that you are a non vegetarian and you are required to campaign for animal rights. Describe this state and explain how you will reduce this inconsistency.
- 5) Explain how self affirmations reduce the impact of threat to our self-concept.
- 6) Discuss self perception and self affirmation?

4.9 GLOSSARY

- Cognitive Dissonance** : An uncomfortable internal state that results when people realize that there is inconsistency between two or more of their attitudes or between their attitudes and their behaviour.
- Hypocrisy** : When an individual publicly advocates some attitudes or behaviour, but acts in a way that is inconsistent with them.
- Individualism/Collectivism** : One value dimension on which national cultures differ (Hofstede, 1980). People are individualists, when they take care only of themselves and their families; they are collectivists when they distinguish between ingroup and outgroups and expect their ingroups (relatives, clans, organisations) to look after them, in exchange for being loyal to them.
- Post decision dissonance** : A state of anxiety experienced after making a decision regarding the possibility of it being wrong. It is usually reduced by increasing the importance assigned to the positive features of the chosen alternative, and increasing the importance assigned to the negative features of the nonchosen alternative.
- Self monitoring** : The process through which people regulate their own behaviour in order to 'look good' so that they will be perceived by others in a favorable manner.

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UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO GROUPS: DEFINITION, CHARACTERISTICS AND TYPES OF GROUPS

Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Groups-Definition, Meaning and Concepts
 - 1.2.1 Group Psychology
 - 1.2.2 Concept of Social Group
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 - 1.4.6 Friendship Groups
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- 1.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.6 Unit End Questions
- 1.7 Suggested Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Social group is, “A group of two or more people who interact with one another and who recognise themselves as a distinct social unit”. Further, social groups play an important role in daily life. These groups are needed for our very survival, as they fulfill one of the basic psychological needs for survival, belonging etc. A social group is not always made up of friends, though friendships may develop within a group. Families are a form of social group in which we relate with parents, brothers and sisters and relatives. Social groups act as great support system when needed. In this unit we are going to learn about what are groups, describe their characteristics and learn the various types of groups and their functions. All groups have certain roles to play and this will be taken up in this unit.

We will also concern ourselves with the individual’s behaviour when alone and when in group. Sometimes situation becomes complicated and interaction among the members of the group depends on communication. The behaviour of the person and the messages that the person sends by speaking are received by the other person and he/she responds to that message by another message and so on. Thus interaction and communication play a vital role among the group members..

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- Define group;
- Explain the meaning of group;
- Describe the characteristics of the group;
- Elucidate the types of group; and
- Explain individual's behaviour in groups.

1.2 GROUPS, DEFINITION, MEANING AND CONCEPTS

From the very beginning of our life, humans are part of one group or the other. From the moment a person is born he or she is a member of a family, which is a group. Starting from mother-child relationship, we enter into the family group. After that, we enter into the peer group, neighbourhood group, social class group, religious group and so many. We always identify ourselves with a group and other group members.

The same individual may be a member of different groups, as for example, two brothers or sisters are not only members of the same family but they may also be members of the same play group and of the same school group. Their behaviour as individuals will vary according to the differences in the groups.

Each person's behaviour is the product of a complex combination of personal interests, attitudes, motives, beliefs and aptitudes with many formal and informal group memberships, identifications and loyalties. Thus, the word group has many meanings. Broadly speaking we can say that a group is the aggregation of human beings. For instance, people who are sitting together in a railway platform to catch the train is a group. The pilgrims who are walking towards a town or a city to participate in a religious festival will also be called a group.

On the other hand, the members of a caste, the members of a club, and the members of a state are also called groups. Since we use the same word "group" to refer to various kinds of groups, so there exists misunderstanding. Not only this, we also use the term group when we deal with mere classification.

When we do something in connection with a sample survey, we consider a number of people with varying age, gender, education, socio-economic status, etc., so that we can easily understand the overall picture of the sample and also classify them in different groups. Actually these people have no relationship with each other. They may never come together but the social scientists when take them up for research they call them groups. Humans cannot think of themselves without a group, in fact they have no existence apart from a group.

Humans, that is people live in a family, and so is a member of the family group. They go to college and have some friends there, then they become one of the members of college friend group. It also happens that sometimes they go to club or parties and thus become a member of that group. Each and every group has different types of activities and as people belong to different types of group in

different situations and time, their behaviour and activities become different considering the nature of the group.

A group may have a strong influence upon the individual in that the individual gladly accepts the activities of the group. Each and every human being has own personal interest, attitudes, values etc. As the group consists of a number of individuals with different background etc. there are differences in the characteristic features of the various groups. Researchers try to find out the causes for these differences in groups as well as try to find out the relationship of individual's characteristics to the characteristics of the group. The behaviour of the individuals generally varies according to the differences and the diverse characteristics of the groups. There are also many reasons for the differences obtained in the group characteristics and also the differences in the responses of the individuals in different groups. The behaviour of the individual is of a certain type when the person is a member of a particular group and the behaviour varies the moment the person moves to another group. For instance the individual in the family will be uninhibited and behave in a relaxed way and express whatever he or she wants to. On the other hand when the individual is in the school, the behaviour changes to one of cautious expression of thoughts and behaves in a way that the teacher wants. The same individual when with the peer group behaves quite differently.

Sometimes the situation becomes so complicated that the interaction among the members of the group depends on a type of communication. The behaviour of the person and the messages that an individual sends by speaking are received by the other person and the latter responds to that message by another message which the first person receives and so on. Thus interaction and communication play a vital role among the group members. Considering these two, that is interaction and communication, acceptance and rejection also come about depending on what is communicated and how.

1.2.1 Group Psychology

The study of groups, organisations and behaviours of the groups is the concern of group psychology. It is a realm of psychology that explores the release of individual control within a group setting. Social, organisational and group psychology are all powerful areas of study that look at the many factors that drive group behaviour and the decisions that a group makes. Depending on the group's influence, the personal wishes and desires of the individual are completely given up for the greater good of the group. It is the role of group psychology to uncover why this release occurs and what effects it has on society.

Many groups are formed based on strong religious or cultural tenets. Group psychology studied these groups and have found that the beliefs these groups hold have a finality about them that becomes inextricably linked in the minds of the group members.. The concepts become both truth and reason. Individuals in the group no longer question anything related to these beliefs. They merely accept them without question. Group members will sometimes reach a point where they will do anything to defend the ideas held to be unquestionable by the group. However when this goes beyond a point, and becomes an obsession it can be destructive.

Terrorist groups typically start out as nothing more than a welcoming collection of individuals who have similar beliefs concerning the world and a higher power. Group psychology concerning terrorists has uncovered an unbreakable bond to ideas and beliefs. Individual members of terrorist groups give up their individuality for the purposes of the group. A collective identity is assumed rather than individual personas, which becomes unhealthy.

1.2.2 Concept of Social Group

A social group consists of two or more people who interact with one another and who recognise themselves as a distinct social unit. The definition is simple enough, but it has significant implications. Frequent interaction leads people to share values and beliefs. This similarity and the interaction cause them to identify with one another. Identification and attachment, in turn, stimulate more frequent and intense interaction. Each group maintains solidarity with in and keeps its identity vis a vis all other groups and social systems.

Groups are among the most stable and enduring of social units. They are important both to their members and to the society at large. Through encouraging regular and predictable behaviour, groups form the foundation upon which the society rests. Thus, a family, a village, a political party, a trade union etc., is all social groups. These are different from social classes, status groups or crowds, which not only lack structure but whose members are less aware or even unaware of the existence of the group. These have been called quasi-groups or groupings.

1.2.3 Definition and Meaning of Groups

Now let us take up some of the formal definitions and meanings of group as given by sociologists and social psychologists. Group may be defined in various ways and each definition emphasises one or the other important features of the group. Some of the important definitions are as follows:

R.M. Williams (1989)

The sociologist R.M. Williams (1989) defined group as a given aggregate of people playing inter-related roles and recognised by themselves or others as a unit of interaction. Here it can be stated that a group is an aggregate of some people. The roles of the group members are inter related. The group is considered as a unit.

R.M. MacIver (1954)

A renowned sociologist Mac Iver stated that “By group we mean any collection of social beings who enter into distinctive social relationships with one another.” According to this definition, it is clear that there must be social relationships between the individual members of a group.

David, E (1968)

A social psychologist, David defined group as follows: “A social psychological group is an organised system of two or more individuals who are interrelated so that the system performs some functions, has a standard set of the role relationship among its members and has a set of norms that regulate the function of the group and each of its members.” In this definition group is structured and organised, the people in the group inter relate and interact with each other, it has certain

rules and regulations and norms that must be followed by all the members of the group.

Kretch, D., Crutchfield, R.S., and Ballachy, E.L. (1962)

Famous for their social psychological contribution, the three social psychologists defined psychological group “ as two or more persons who meet the following conditions , viz., (i) the relations among the members are independent (ii) each member’s behaviour influences the behaviour of each of the others, (iii) the members ‘share an ideology’ – a set of beliefs, values and norms which regulate their mutual conduct.” This definition too focuses on not only interaction and rules and norms but also mentions a shared ideology amongst the group members.

Paulus , Paul, B.(1989)

A sociologist, Paulus Paul defined group in the following words, “ A group consists of two or more interacting persons who share common goals, have a stable relationship, are somehow interdependent and perceive that they are in fact part of a group.” According to this definition, we can say that individuals interact with each other, either directly or indirectly. Besides this, the group members are interdependent in some manner, i.e., what happens to one must affect what happens to the others. Not only this, their relationship must be relatively stable. The members of the group involve to attain the goals and their interaction will be in a structured form so that, each group member performs the same or more or less similar functions each time they meet. Finally, it can be said that the individuals involved in a group must recognise that they are part of a group.

To know the meaning of the group more clearly one should think about all the groups to which one belongs, viz., local friends, college friends, music and dance group and so many. Generally people join in groups due to various needs, and these needs are:

Need 1: Group members help to satisfy important psychological and social needs, viz., receiving affection and attention, for attaining belongingness.

Need 2: Group members help to achieve the goal in a smooth and easy way. By working with others, you can perform the task well than alone.

Need 3: Group members can provide each other knowledge and information which is not available to collect independently.

Need 4: Group members help the individual to experience safety and security.

1.3 CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF GROUP

Suppose you belong to a group where you may observe some special features which you can accept or not. It may be good or bad, it may be healthy or unhealthy, it may be favourable or unfavourable, but some significant features exist there which you can say are the characteristic features of the group. These include the following:

A sense of we feeling: There is a feeling of belongingness among the members of the group. The members of the group help each other in performing their

duties. They work collectively against the harmful powers. They treat others as outsiders. They always try to make the group self-sufficient.

Common interest: Each and every member of the group has a common interest. There is a similarity among the members which promotes unity. The group includes those persons who are related to each other in such a way that they should be treated as one.

A feeling of unity: This is essential for every group. Each and every member of the group treats each other as their own and there develops a sense of sympathy among the family members.

Relatedness to each other: It is true that members of the group are inter-related and this social relation is called group. There is a reciprocal communication among the group members. Social relations are the fundamentals of the group life.

Affected by group characteristics: Each and every group has some social characteristics which separate it from similar and dissimilar groups. These characteristics affect the members of the group. The nature may be different for different persons, but still all the members are affected by the group.

Common values: The social values of the members of a family are common and are traditionally respected and communicated to the succeeding generation. They are expressed by the mutual behaviour of the members. Members of the social group are bound together by common values.

Control of group: In each group there are some customs, norms and procedures which are acceptable to everyone. In fact, without some norms, the existence of group life is practically impossible. It can be said that the reasons behind the similarity of behaviour in group life is that the actions of the members are controlled by the group.

Obligation: In family situation, all the members have complementary obligations to each other. Also, the relationships between the members of a group are strengthened through their mutual obligation and their common social values.

Expectations: Not only mutual obligation, the members of the group expect love, sympathy, co-operation etc. from other members of the group. If mutual expectation is fulfilled, the group members are maintained in tact. A group can maintain its existence only if the constituent members fulfill their responsibility by satisfying the desires among themselves.

Social organisation

Social organisation is the organisation of groups. The social groups are the units of the social organisation. Therefore, the integration and disintegration of social organisation are dependent upon the integration or disintegration of the groups. In group, social relationship is a very important factor. The first and foremost social relationship indicates the relationship among the family members. Thus, it can further be said that family is a very important social group.

Every individual is one of the family members in his or her family. They interact with other family members in the family. There is a reciprocal relationship between

the individual and others. Certainly the individual will have the sense of 'we feeling' as he or she belongs to that family. Among the family members of the family there are relationships such as husband-wife, father-son, brother-sister etc. and they all work together for the interests of the family in a mood of mutual co-operation. Each and every member of the family treats the other members as his or her own and in spite of differences of opinion they have some common ideals and values. It is mainly due to the common interest of the family which works as a well-knit unit.

For example one can state that "school is a social group" whose significant characteristics are :

- All children have common goal.
- The students and the teacher are motivated for the achievement of a common goal.
- School has an organised structure.
- School offers excellent opportunities for group.

1.3.1 Salient Features of Group

In addition to the above, there are a few salient features regarding group which are presented below:

- In group, one or more individuals come together and influence each other.
- There must be social relationships between the individual members of a group.
- It sometimes happens that there exists some common motives, drives, interests, emotions etc.
- There is also need for communication among the group members. It may be verbal or non-verbal.
- Group has some common object of attention and group members stimulate each other.
- Group members have common loyalty and participate in similar activities.
- A feeling of unity is essential for group. Group members treat each other as their own and a sense of sympathy develops among them.
- Similarity of behaviour in group life indicates that the action of the members are controlled by the group.
- There are some customs, norms and procedures which are acceptable to everyone but if exception happens, then they will be criticized by the public.

1.3.2 The Role of Groups

As mentioned earlier, it is well known that every individual acts and behaves differently in different groups. When a person is alone, the behaviour is different and when the person is in a group, the behaviour is still different. This happens because every individual is highly concerned with the social image that he or she presents to people. Individuals are generally concerned about how and what other people think about them and wants to put before them their best self. Hence the difference in their behaviours.

When alone, we tend to be more relaxed, less concerned with the outward expression of our behaviour, and are basically ‘ourselves.’ Add just one other person, even if we do not know that person, our behaviour tends to change. This change can be in either direction that is positive or negative. Research has found that when others are present, our level of arousal is increased. In other words, we are suddenly more aware of what is going on around us. Because of this, we tend to perform better at tasks that are well learned or simple. When completing a difficult or new task, however, our performance level decreases and we tend to do more poorly. This type of behavioural change and betterment at task when we are with people etc., is called social facilitation. This happens because of group’s influence. In a group, when other members are watching, we tend to be relatively more self conscious, and thus tend to make more mistakes. On the other hand professional players perform far better and at their best when being watched by large number of persons, because they have learned the game to their best ability.

Also in a group, people tend to think alike like other members even though away from the group, their thinking will be highly different. Also in a group with which a person is able to identify self, and be happy in it, the tendency to think like the group members emerges. This phenomenon is called group think. If this identification with the group goes beyond a point, it may end up in destruction, as is obtained in Klu Klux Klan etc.

We are all aware of people being mugged on the road, beaten up, raped etc. in broad day light and large number of persons watch it without doing anything about it. This kind of incidents happen more in big cities. The larger the group, the less responsible one is towards the group. The internal push to help a person decreases as the group gets larger.

1.4 TYPES OF GROUP

Groups can be classified in different ways and based on certain criteria. These criteria are given below:

- 1) The level of intimacy
- 2) Basis of relationships
- 3) Basis of norms and rules
- 4) Organised vs disorganised
- 5) Basis of tasks to be accomplished
- 6) On the basis of functions
- 7) Interest based
- 8) Friendship based.

Let us deal with the above a little more in detail.

1.4.1 The Level of Intimacy

Based on this we can classify groups into primary and secondary group.

Primary group: There is an intimate face-to-face relationship among the members and the members experience the ‘we feeling’ to the maximum. Family, play groups

and village community come under this category. If all groups are important to their members and to society, some groups are more important than others. Early in the twentieth century, Charles H. Cooley gave the name, primary groups, to those groups that he said are characterised by intimate face-to-face association and those are fundamental in the development and continued adjustment of their members.

He identified three basic primary groups, (i) the family, (ii) the child's play group, and (iii) the neighborhoods or community among adults. These groups, he said, are almost universal in all societies. They give to people their earliest and most complete experiences of social unity. They are instrumental in the development of the social life. They promote the integration of their members in the larger society.

Secondary groups: These are characterised by anonymous, impersonal, and instrumental relationships. People move frequently from one section of the country to another and they change from established relationships to widespread loneliness. Young people, particularly, turn to drugs, seek communal living groups and adopt deviant lifestyles in attempts to find meaningful primary group relationships. The social context has changed so much that the primary group relationship today is not as simple as they were in the past.

In secondary groups, the relationships are more or less casual and marked by common interest. Clubs, trade unions etc. are under this category.

The social groups other than those of primary groups may be termed as secondary groups. They are a residual category. They are often called special interest groups. Maclver and Page refer to them as great associations. Primary groups are found predominantly in societies where life is relatively simple. With the expansion in population and territory of a society people's interests become diversified and and differentiated.

The new range of the interests demands a complex organisation. Especially selected persons act on behalf of all and hence arises a hierarchy of officials called bureaucracy. These features characterise the rise of the modern state, the great corporation, the factory, the labour union, a university or a nationwide political party and so on. These are secondary groups. Ogburn and Nimkoff define secondary groups as groups which provide experience lacking in intimacy.

Characteristics of the secondary group are the following:

- i) *Dominance of secondary relations:* Secondary groups are characterised by indirect, impersonal, contractual and non-inclusive relations. Relations are indirect because secondary groups are bigger in size and members may not stay together. Relations are contractual in the sense they are oriented towards certain interests
- ii) *Largeness of the size:* Secondary groups are relatively larger in size. City, nation, political parties, trade unions and corporations, international associations are bigger in size. They may have thousands and lakhs of members. There may not be any limit to the membership in the case of some secondary groups.

- iii) *Membership*: Membership in the case of secondary groups is mainly voluntary. Individuals are at liberty to join or to go away from the groups. However there are some secondary groups like the state whose membership is almost involuntary.
- iv) *No Physical basis*: Secondary groups are not characterised by physical proximity. Many secondary groups are not limited to any definite area. There are some secondary groups like the Rotary Club and Lions Club which are international in character. The members of such groups are scattered over a vast area.
- v) *Specific ends or interest*: Secondary groups are formed for the realisation of some specific interests or ends. They are called special interest groups. Members are interested in the groups because they have specific ends to aim at.
- vi) *Indirect communication*: Contacts and communications in the case of secondary groups are mostly indirect. Mass media of communication such as radio, telephone, television, newspaper, movies, magazines and post and telegraph are resorted to by the members to have communication.
- vii) *Nature of group control*: Informal means of social control are less effective in regulating the relations of members. Moral control is only secondary. Formal means of social control such as law, legislation, police, court etc. are made to control the behaviour of members. The behaviour of the people is largely influenced and controlled by public opinion, propaganda, rule of law and political ideologies.
- viii) *Group structure*: The secondary group has a formal structure. A formal authority is set up with designated powers and a clear-cut division of labour in which the function of each is specified in relation to the function of all.
- ix) *Organised*: Secondary groups are mostly organised groups. Different statuses and roles that the members assume are specified. Distinctions based on caste, colour, religion, class, language etc. are less rigid and there is greater tolerance towards other people or groups.
- x) *Limited influence on personality*: Secondary groups are specialised in character. People involvement in them is also of limited significance. Members's attachment to them is also very much limited. Further people spend most of their time in primary groups than in secondary groups. Hence secondary groups have very limited influence on the personality of the members.

American sociologist Talcott Parsons distinguished five factors that differentiate primary groups from secondary groups:

That is, relations between members of primary groups, as contrasted with secondary groups, tend to be

- 1) diffuse, rather than specific or delimited,
- 2) particularistic, rather than universalistic,
- 3) ascription-based (i.e., based on who or what you are), rather than achievement-based (i.e., based on what you do or have done),
- 4) other-oriented or group-oriented, rather than self-oriented,
- 5) affective or emotion-laden, rather than emotionally neutral.

Secondary groups are those in which relations between members tend to fit the opposite poles of the five factors.

1.4.2 On the Basis of Relationship

i) *In-group/ we group* vs Out group

In In-group or we group, we identify ourselves within that group wherein the members have common object and common interest. They have a sense of we feeling. The members of the in groups treat others as outsiders. These groups can be formed on the basis of relationship, country, political interests, economic interests etc.

Out-group is one in which the members are considered as outsiders by the in group people. Groups other than ingroup are generally called out groups.

The opposite of in-group bias is *out-group bias* where, by inference, out-group people are viewed more negatively and given worse treatment. This is the basis of racial inequality.

In-group linguistic bias is where out-group people are described in abstract terms (which depersonifies them) when they conform to the out-group stereotype. Out-group people will be referred to in more specific, concrete terms when they act in unexpected ways.

When people identify themselves with a group, they perceive themselves and the group members as different from other groups. This can be explained in terms of the social identity theory. According to this theory, a person has not one, “personal self”, but rather several selves that correspond to widening circles of group membership. Different social contexts may trigger an individual to think, feel and act on the basis of his personal, family or national “level of self” (Turner et al, 1987).

Also an individual has multiple “social identities”. Social identity is the individual’s self-concept derived from perceived membership of social groups (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002)..

Social Identity Theory asserts that group membership creates ingroup/ self-categorization and enhancement in ways that favour the in-group at the expense of the out-group.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) identify three variables whose contribution to the emergence of ingroup favoritism is particularly important. A) the extent to which individuals identify with an ingroup to internalise that group membership as an aspect of their self-concept. B) the extent to which the prevailing context provides ground for comparison between groups. C) the perceived relevance of the comparison group, which itself will be shaped by the relative and absolute status of the ingroup. Individuals are likely to display favoritism when an ingroup is central to their self-definition and a given comparison is meaningful or the outcome is contestable.

Social Identity Theory has a considerable impact on social psychology. It is tested in a wide range of fields and settings and includes prejudice, stereotyping, negotiation and language use. The theory has also implications on the way people deal with social and organisational change. For example in a minimal group studies, schoolboys were assigned to groups, which were intended to be as

meaningless as possible. They were assigned randomly, excluding roles of interpersonal discrimination such as history of conflict, personal animosity or interdependence. The schoolboys assigned points to anonymous members of both their own group and the other group. Conclusions were that even the most minimal conditions were sufficient to encourage favouring the in group responses. Participants picked a reward pair that awarded more points to people who were identified as ingroup members. In other words, they displayed *ingroup favoritism*.

1.4.3 Organised vs Disorganised

Groups can be categorized into formal, informal group etc. Let us see what these are:

- i) *Formal group*: It is generally formed on the basis of specific norms, rules and values. The group of students in a classroom comes under the category of formal group. So, school is one of the formal group setting.
- ii) *Informal group*: The nature of the group is not formal at all. The rules are usually flexible. Play groups, peer group and social clubs etc. are examples of informal groups.

In addition groups can also classified into various categories as *organised and spontaneous groups* etc. Let us consider these below.

- iii) *Organised groups*: The groups which are formed for specific purpose and are carefully planned is called organised groups. The family, the school etc. are called organised groups.
- iv) *Spontaneous groups*: The groups are formed without any careful planning. An example is the audience in a theater. Audience may be considered as spontaneous group when they come to listen to a speech or watch a play.
- v) *Command groups*: Command groups are specified by the organisational chart. It consists of a supervisor and the subordinates who report to the supervisor.

1.4.4 On the Basis of Tasks

- i) *Task groups*: This consists of a group of people who have come together to achieve a common task. In many situations there is a specified time period. This can be referred to as task forces.
- ii) *Functional groups*: Functional group is generally created by the organisation to accomplish specific goals within an unspecified time frame. Functional group generally exists after achievement of current goals and objects.

1.4.5 Interest Groups

These groups usually continue over a period of time and may last longer than general informal groups. It is seen that members' interest may not be part of the same organisational department but they are bound by some common interest.

1.4.6 Friendship Groups

These may be of different types. These groups are formed by the members who enjoy similar social activities, political beliefs, religious values and other common bonds.

1.4.7 Reference Groups

This is the group against which other groups and group members as well as others evaluate themselves. Reference groups have a strong influence on members' behaviour. According to Merton, sociologist, reference groups are those groups which are the referring points of the individuals, towards which the person is oriented and which influences the person's opinion, tendency and behaviour. The individual is surrounded by countless reference groups. Both the memberships and inner groups and non memberships and outer groups may be reference groups.

1.5 LET US SUM UP

Group is a collection of individuals. Group refers to two or more persons who interact with one another. They share common goals and recognise themselves that they belong to a group. Group members interact with each other, either directly or indirectly. Their relationship is relatively stable. Their interaction should be structured in some manner so that they perform the same and similar function when they meet.

Generally group members help to satisfy both psychological and social needs, such as giving attention and receiving attention. Groups help persons to fulfill their need for security. In contrast, one can think about a mere collection of individuals, who are not part of a group, as for example, members of a crowd, as in the case of disorganised group.

In a nutshell it can be said that the group has some kind of structure to hold it together and attain the goals effectively. The structure is hierarchical where the functions and powers are distributed. Group may be of different types, viz., primary and secondary group, formal and informal group, organised and spontaneous group, command group, task group, functional group, interest group, friendship group, reference group etc. Group structure is a pattern of relationships among members that hold the group together. It can be interpreted in various ways depending on group size, group roles, group norms and group cohesiveness.

1.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you mean by the term 'group'? Briefly discuss.
- 2) Define group. Write in brief about the characteristics of group.
- 3) Elucidate briefly about the different types of group.
- 4) Differentiate between formal and informal group with examples.

1.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

Hogg, M.A. & Vaughan, G.M. (2002). *Social Psychology (3rd ed.)* London: Prentice Hall.

Hare, A. P. (1962). *Handbook of Small Group Research*. New York: Macmillan Publishers.

Bales, R. F. (1950). *Interaction Process Analysis: A Method for the Study of Small Groups*. MA: Addison-Wesley.

UNIT 2 GROUP PROCESS: SOCIAL FACILITATION, SOCIAL LOAFING, GROUP INTERACTION, GROUP POLARIZATION AND GROUP MIND

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Group Processes
 - 2.2.1 Development of Group
 - 2.2.2 Group 'as a whole' Processes
- 2.3 Social Facilitation
 - 2.3.1 Drive Theory of Social Facilitation
- 2.4 Social Loafing
 - 2.4.1 Characteristics of Social Loafing
- 2.5 Group Interaction
- 2.6 Group Morale
- 2.7 Group Polarization
- 2.8 Group Mind
- 2.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.10 Unit End Questions
- 2.11 Glossary
- 2.12 Suggested Readings

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will be dealing with group dynamics, which refers to the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of a group. It concerns how groups form, their structures and processes, and how they function in different situations. There are mainly five stages of group development, viz., forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning. It will be taken up in detail. We will then deal with group processes followed by development of group. Next we will take up social facilitation which refers to the influence of the presence of others in improving an individual's interaction. Group mind will then be taken up and dealt in detail.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Define group processes;
- Describe the characteristic features of group process;
- Explain the factors involved in group process;

- Define social facilitation and the factors related to the same;
- Define social loafing;
- Describe the characteristic features of social loafing;
- Explain the group interaction process; and
- Analyse group mind and group think.

2.2 GROUP AND GROUP FORMATION

The word 'group' has a variety of meaning. It refers to any aggregation of human beings including the pedestrians on the road or gathering of people in any place. A structured group has certain characteristics. Group development refers to the concerns as to how groups form, their structures and processes, and how they function in different situations, etc. There are mainly five stages of group development, viz., forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning.

Forming is a stage which is characterized by some confusion and uncertainty. Forming is actually an orientation period when members get to know one another and share expectations about the group.

Storming is the stage where one can see the highest level of disagreement and conflict. Members mainly voice concern and it is important to note that criticism occurs in this stage.

Norming is characterized by the recognition of individual differences and shared expectations. Responsibilities are divided among members and the group decides how it will evaluate progress.

Performing occurs when the group has matured and attains a feeling of cohesiveness. In this stage, members of the group make decision through a rational process that is focused on relevant goals rather than emotional issues.

Adjourning indicates that members of the group often experience feelings of closure and sadness as they prepare to leave.

Thus, group is a collection of individuals and as mentioned earlier it refers to two or more persons who interact with one another, share common goals and recognize that they belong to a group. It must be remembered that no person can live in isolation. This is so because groups help us to satisfy important psychological needs and social needs. Different persons perform different types of tasks. Group may choose a person to serve as a leader and other persons as followers. There is link among the members. Not only this, interaction among the group members is a very important aspect for smooth running of the activities of the group.

2.2.1 Development of Group

A very common question that is asked is that why and how groups develop. There are several theories regarding group development. A classic theory, developed by George Homans, suggests that groups develop mainly on the basis of activities, interactions and sentiments. Basically, this theory indicates that when individuals share common activities they will have more interaction and

will develop attitudes (either positive or negative) toward each other. The main element is the interaction of the individuals involved.

Another important theory is social exchange theory which offers an alternative explanation for group development. According to this theory individuals form the relationship on the basis of implicit expectation of mutually beneficial exchanges based on trust and 'felt' obligations. Also it is a perception that exchange relationships have to be positive if persons are to be attracted to and affiliate with a group.

Besides this, another important theory is social identity theory which offers explanation for group formation. This theory suggests that individuals get a sense of identity and self esteem based on their membership in salient groups. The group is demographically, culturally and organisationally based.

One of the most important activities that groups perform is decision-making. This is the process through which individuals or groups combine and integrate information from the several possible actions. Most people believe that the groups by utilising the expertise and knowledge of their members and by avoiding extreme courses of action usually reach better decisions than when decision is taken by single individuals.

When groups begin to discuss any issue, it is seen that their members generally express unanimous agreement. During the decision period, members convey a wide range of views. Generally, social decision process happens in phases, that is, the first phase is the discussion phase which helps to confirm or strengthen the most popular view, which rarely gets reversed. The second phase is with the correct situation or decision that will ultimately emerge in the forefront.

Besides the above, there are several aspects of the group's procedure such as the rules it follows in addressing management of the group, management of interactions among members and so on. Some persons, knowing about the opinions, especially the influential members, incline to join the majority and thereby tilt the decision in the required direction.

2.2.2 Group 'as a whole' Processes

This refers to those behaviours and dynamics that apply to the group as a distinct psychological construction. Cohesion is the most important factor in this process, especially in the clinical, theoretical and empirical areas. While conceptual and operational definitions of the term vary, cohesion generally refers to the emotional bonding amongst members of the group as well as a shared commitment to the group and its primary task.

Cohesion is often regarded as the equivalent of the concept of therapeutic alliance in individual psychotherapy. It is the group process which is generally linked to positive therapeutic outcome. This cohesion can range from massification (the act of taking all people in a group together as a whole, without reference to their individual characteristics or needs), fusion (Greene, 1983), oneness (Turquet, 1974), deindividuation (Deiner, 1977), contagion (Polansky et al., 1950) and groupthink (Janis, 1994) at one extreme, to aggregation (Hopper, 2003), fragmentation (Springmann, 1976), individuation (Greene, 1983) and the anti group (Nitsun, 1996) at the other extreme.

In extreme form, cohesion in group may divert the group from meaningful work. Hence there is a need for the leader to monitor the nature of the emotional bonds and commitment of the members and help the group attain a dialectic balance between needs for relatedness and communion on one hand, and needs for autonomy and differentiation on the other.

Cohesion generally refers to the emotional bonds among members for each other and for a shared commitment to the group and its primary task. It is often regarded as the equivalent to the concept of therapeutic alliance in individual psychotherapy and is the group process variable generally linked to positive therapeutic outcome.

Beyond the level of cohesion, the group as a whole can be perceived, experienced and represented in the minds of the members with a range of positive (e.g., engaging) and negative (e.g., conflictual) attributes. The leader must take into account these attributes understand them as positive or negative and as these can affect task accomplishment.

The group may be experienced in a positive way as being protective, and containing capacities to help the group grow and develop. Or the group may also be negatively experienced which may annihilate the group or engulf it and not allow it to grow or develop in a positive way. These contrasting images of the group are formed from socially shared projections.

Other negative group processes and formations have been identified that can serve defensive and work avoidant needs. Where the group is a dependent group, or where a group takes a stand of confrontation or has the tendency to run away or escape from conflicting situation, members within such groups develop or show anxiety. This regressive process needs to be dealt with on a priority basis through the process of interpretation or confrontation. This would in turn allow the group to shift towards more task oriented and less defensive behaviour.

Splits and subgroups: To cope with group induced anxieties, as mentioned above, members of one group can take an approach of 'us versus them', or 'in versus out' polarities. These internal arrangements are typically seen as defensive arrangements that can subvert task accomplishment and ultimately need to be managed by the group leader.

The Pair or Couple: The pair or couple in a group can represent a re enactment and recapitulation of Oedipal or neurotic level wishes and tensions. This can also represent primitive group level defensive processes, which may manifest in the form of certain disorders such as depression etc.

Such dynamic process can be acted out via extra group liaisons (sexual or otherwise). Or it can be enacted by the group in such a manner it may affect the development process itself. The leader or the group therapist has to then take care of the potentially destructive processes through exploration, interpretation or confrontation.

The Individual Member and Leader Roles

In certain groups there may be a scapegoat on whom all negative aspects are transferred. The formation of scapegoat and other non rational restrictive, delineated roles such as the spokesperson, hero, and difficult person or member are prominent group phenomena. It is important to understand that these roles

emerge not only from the needs and personalities of the individuals filling them, but also from collusive enactments, co-constructions etc., between the individual and the group. Such unique roles are not “all bad” or destructive. They may serve important functions for the entire group, including speaking the unspeakable, stirring emotions and revitalising the group, carrying unacceptable aspects of others, and even creating a sense of hope (Shields, 2000).

Self Assessment Questions

1) What are the five stages of group development?

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2) What theories are associated with group development?

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3) What is meant by “Group as a whole Process”?

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4) Describe the various aspects related to the “Group as a whole Process”

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2.3 SOCIAL FACILITATION

Social facilitation may be defined as the improvement in performance produced by the mere presence of others. It indicates that the persons perform the same task independently. The basic idea behind Zajonc's drive theory of social facilitation is the presence of others which produces increments in arousal.

Allport (1920) defined the term social facilitation as one of the improvements in performance produced by the mere presence of others, either as audience or as co-actors that is the persons performing the same task, but independently. Some basic principles are as follows:

- 1) When arousal increases, the tendency to make dominant responses also increases.
- 2) Dominant responses may be correct or incorrect for any given task.
- 3) The presence of other person will facilitate performance when an individual's dominant responses are the correct ones in a given situation or vice-versa.
- 4) Learning to perform a new task has a significant role in this context.
- 5) Social facilitating was not always facilitating, sometimes it appears to be misleading.
- 6) Individuals sometimes believe that their performance may be observed and evaluated by others.
- 7) There are large individual differences with respect to basic form of group influence.
- 8) Evaluation apprehension takes an important role in social facilitation.
- 9) Good sense improves the performance.
- 10) Mere presence of others is arousing and influences performance, but that the possibility of being evaluated by others increases even more, and produces even stronger social facilitation effects.
- 11) When individuals have little reason to pay attention to others present on the scene, social facilitation fails to occur, when they have strong reasons for paying attention to others, social facilitation occurs.
- 12) Social facilitation is the 'simple type of group influence'.

2.3.1 Drive Theory of Social Facilitation

The basic idea behind Zajonc's drive theory of social facilitation is that the presence of others produce increments in arousal, which affect our performance. Thus, it can be said that the presence of others will facilitate performance when a person's dominant responses are the correct ones in a given situation but the presence of others will impair performance, when a person's dominant responses are incorrect in a given situation. When individuals have little reason to pay attention to others present on the scene, social facilitation fails to occur, but when have strong reason for paying attention to others, social facilitation occurs.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Define social facilitation.

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2) What are the basic principles of social facilitation?

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3) Discuss the drive theory of social facilitation.

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2.4 SOCIAL LOAFING

One may observe in many situations that there are some persons in a group who work hard while others may work little, doing less than their share of what they might do if they work alone. Social psychologists want to see the effects giving the term as ‘social loafing’. This is a very common feature in many situations. The effect of this is known as social loafing.

Thus social loafing is the reduction in motivation and effort when individuals work collectively in a group compared to when they work individually or as independent co actors. Social loafing seems to be a basic fact of social life. The activities of sports teams, committees, juries etc. are under the category of social loafing.

2.4.1 Characteristics of Social Loafing

The important characteristics of social loafing are:

- As group size increases, each member feels less and less responsible for the task being performed. Each person exerts decreasing effort on it.
- According to Expectancy-Valence theory it can be said that individuals will work hard on a given task only to the extent that
 - i) hard work will lead to better performance (expectancy),
 - ii) better performance will be recognised and rewarded (instrumentality) and
 - iii) the rewards available are ones they value and desire (valence).
- Expectancy – the perception that increased effort will lead to better performance.
- Instrumentality – the belief that good performance will be recognised and rewarded, may also be weakened when people work together in groups. Social loafing occurs and within the framework of the collective effort model. When individual works together with others, the relationship between their own effort and performance and rewards is more uncertain than when they work alone.
- Collective effort – Perceived links between individuals' effort and their outcomes are weaker when they work together with others in a group.
- Social loafing is a serious problem. It is most likely to occur under conditions in which individuals' contributions can't be evaluated, when people work on task they find boring or uninspiring and when they work with others, they don't respect and don't know very well.
- In many situations social loafing poses a threat to performance in many settings.
- Groups can reduce social loafing by increasing group members' commitment to successful task performance.
- Social loafing is reduced when individuals consider their contributions to the task as unique rather than merely redundant with those of others.
- Social loafing can be reduced by strengthening group cohesiveness.
- Social loafing is not an unavoidable feature of task-performance groups. It can be reduced especially when appropriate safe guards are built into the situation.

2.5 GROUP INTERACTION

Group interaction is a two-way process where each individual or group stimulates the other and in varying degrees modifies the behaviour of the participants. The personality characteristics and behaviour of the individual members of a group affect the behaviour of others and make a significant impact over the functioning of a group as a whole. Social psychology is concerned with the interactions between individuals and between individuals and groups. Interaction can take

place in a face-to-face situation as and when two friends or a parent and a child are interacting with each other. Interaction refers to a set of observable behaviours which takes place where there are two and more persons. When a person is in a class and a lecturer makes some interesting remarks, this is automatically followed by interaction amongst students as well as interaction with the lecturer. In the process one would also find certain degree of interpersonal influence.

Interpersonal influence is that in which there are simultaneous effects of two or more persons on each other, that is, there exist reciprocal effects. Human interaction is based on communication. It is communication of the information that is most vital for the survival and promotion of culture. Sharing of information will make information of the common property of the whole group, and thus enhances the cultural life of the group.

Individual has his own motives and attitudes when he enters into interaction process. On the other hand, each group has its own shared rules or norms which affect the interaction process. As a result of the interaction, the motives and attitudes of the individual may be affected and some change brought in him. Lastly, it is seen that the changes in the individuals who are interacting may bring about changes in the characteristics of the group. Not only this, the concept of interaction helps us to understand the problem.

Sherif (1956) has described that there are four properties which are essential in the formation and functioning of small informal groups. These are:

- a) *Common motives conducive to interaction among individuals:* Informal groups may arise only through the interaction of individuals with common motives. Common motives are conducive to interaction. The individuals perceive, the others also face the same problem and that co-operation with them has some relevance to solve the problem. By this in-group feeling develops. The sense of belongingness may provide a sense of security and importance.
- b) *Differential effects of intercommunication of members:* When we interact with each other, we perceive the other people as unique individuals with certain abilities or disabilities. The individuals in the course of their interaction understand in a more or less definite way of intelligence and maintain more or less same character qualities with each other.
- c) *Formation of group members:* The differential way of interaction will bring about certain expectations and if those expectations are fulfilled by the individuals, there will be hierarchical status within the group. One individual may become the leader of the group because of his talents and courage. He may assume leadership and group may accept him as a leader.
- d) *Formation of group norms:* In connection with the emergence of group structure, there will be an emergence of group norms too. Norms may also develop regarding the behaviour of the members of the group towards those who are not members. This makes for social distance. Time is an important condition for the formation of the group. Actually group formation occurs after a series of episodes. When the individuals join together at varying intervals and engage themselves in the group activities the group is undoubtedly knit together.

Besides this, it can further be said that the effectiveness of the group depends upon its structural characteristics like the size, status, channels of communication etc. Satisfaction is greater for the individuals in small groups. There seems to be indication of sense of belongingness which ultimately contributes to group effectiveness. It may further be stated that the basis of attraction of the group may lie in the interaction itself because of the mutual satisfaction of needs.

According to Cartwright and Zander (1968) group cohesiveness includes such factors as attraction of individual members to each other interpersonally, the attraction of the members do the activities and functions of the group. These two factors enable the group to become organised as a system. A structured group has certain characteristics. There will be norms regulating the activities and behaviour of members. On the other hand, we can say about another group, known as, “reference group”. This group takes as a basis for self-evaluation and attitude formation. The normative function involves the setting of standards for attitude, belief and behaviour. One individual can compare self with other individuals and evaluate self in terms of reference group.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Define social loafing.

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2) What are the characteristics of social loafing?

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3) What is meant by group interaction?

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4) Describe the properties for functioning of the small groups.

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2.6 GROUP MORALE

This implies that individuals by being members of a group, have self control and a sense of discipline. Individuals by being member of a group, recognise the presence of a positive goal for the group to achieve. They experience a feeling of togetherness by being members of the group, awareness of a danger to the group (which they are able to sense as a member of the group) and also have the conviction that conditions can be improved so that the goal can be reached.

Participation in the activities of a group with high morale is stimulating as well as gratifying to the members of the group. It may thus be stated in this context that significance of social control depends not only on the nature of the group norm but also on the state of the group morale. One can study the group as a whole and the various changes that occur in the behaviour of the members of the group and also how these changes are transmitted to all the individuals, so that the behaviour of the group is altered. The group behaviour can be understood only if both the personality of the individual and the character of the social situation are taken into consideration. Thus, it can be said that group behaviour is a function of both individual and social situation. Psychological effects take an important role in this regard.

2.7 GROUP POLARIZATION

The tendency of group members to shift towards more extreme position than those they initially held as a result of group discussion. Groups are actually more likely to adopt extreme positions than individuals making decision alone. It is seen that sometimes a group may show a pronounced tendency to shift towards certain views that are more extreme than the ones with which they initially began considering many different kinds of decisions and many different contexts. This is group polarization. It is remarkable to note that group polarization does not refer to a tendency of groups to split apart into the opposite poles, on the contrary, it refers to a strengthening of the group's initial preferences.

The occurrence of polarization may lead many decision making groups to adopt positions that are increasingly extreme. Research evidence suggests that social comparison may be relatively more important in some context, especially where group polarization plays a significant role. It is seen that many important decisions are taken by the group and group decisions can be predicted by social decision schemes which are the simple rules relating to individual views held by members in regard to the group's final decision.

Group polarization does not refer to a tendency of groups to split apart into two opposing camps or poles. On the contrary, it refers to a strengthening of the group's initial preferences. Social comparison is an important factor for group polarization. The occurrence of polarization may lead many decision making groups to adopt position that are increasingly extreme.

2.8 GROUP MIND

Group is not a mere sum of the individual minds, but that a group has certain characteristics of its own and influences the individuals who are members of the group. Social psychology is concerned not only with the behaviour of the groups

and with social situations but also with collective behaviour of groups. Marx(1818-1883) had stressed the fact that social structure determines the individual's belief, attitudes etc. Some of them also stressed the fact that social groups have a continuity and unity that each group manifest certain uniformities of behaviour through their custom and institutional practices. McDougall (1920) used the term "group mind" and the term is used mainly on the following factors:

- The members of the group must be aware of the origin of their group and its various characteristics which indicates the continuity.
- Every member must feel that he is a part of the group which means self-consciousness.
- There must be free exchange of ideas between the members of the group and there must be a common body of thought which indicates interaction.
- The group must have certain traditions which are shared by each other.

Any individual is a member of a certain group. They may behave in a particular way. But such behaviour can be explained without positing a mysterious "group mind" which compels people to behave in certain ways. In crowd, with the loss of individuality, a form of group consciousness develops, a fusion of mind with mind, a sympathetic participation of each with each on the emotional level which is common to all of the participants.

In this context, we can use another term "group think". Group think is the tendency of high cohesive groups to assume that their decisions can not be wrong. In other words, all members are expected to support the group's decision and ignore information contrary to it. Group think is a strong tendency for decision-making groups to close ranks and support the decision strongly, and also neglect or ignore any information contrary to it. Once the collection of state of mind develops, the group becomes unwilling to change its course of action. The first and foremost factor for the group mind is that there exists a very high level of cohesiveness among the group members. The second factor is the kind of emergent group norm which suggests that group is correct and normally superior.

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| <p>Self Assessment Questions</p> <p>1) Define Group morale.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>2) Describe Group Polarization.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> |
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3) What is Group Mind?
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4) What factors are involved in group mind?
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2.9 LET US SUM UP

Groups are the products of interaction. Every one deals with groups and is part of groups, which are already well established, as for instance, such as the family, the church, the political party and so on . When individuals with common motives interact with each other for a fairly long time, group structure emerges. The differential effects of interaction will bring about certain expectations and if these are fulfilled by the individuals there will be hierarchical status within the group. Differences in ability and character bring about differences in expectations. Thus status forms with the group, as well as, in the taking up of definite roles. When this group structure emerges and the group formation is successful, there will be solidarity within the group making it strong. The effectiveness of the group depends upon its structural characteristics like the size, structure, channels of communication etc. Generally, satisfaction is greater for the individuals in small groups. There is a sense of belongingness to the group and this contributes to group effectiveness.

Presence of a positive goal for the group to achieve, a feeling of togetherness in the members of the group, awareness of a danger to group, a conviction that conditions can be improved so that the goals can be reached and finally, there lies an awareness of advancement towards the group goals. The tendency of highly cohesive groups is that they assume that their decisions can not be wrong and that all members must support the groups' decisions and ignore information which are contrary to it. Once groupthink takes hold in a decision-making group, pressure toward maintaining high levels of group consensus overrides the motivation to evaluate all potential courses of action as accurately as possible.

2.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you mean by the term 'group interaction'? Briefly discuss.
- 2) What is the relationship between group mind and group polarization?
- 3) Briefly discuss about the steps regarding 'group formation'.
- 4) What is social loafing? Elucidate with examples.

2.11 GLOSSARY

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| Group | : Two or more people who interact and influence one another. |
| Group dynamics | : The way in which changes take place in the behaviour of other members of the group. Groups can mobilise powerful force which may be constructive or destructive. |
| Group structure | : The differences of roles and status relations within a group. |
| Group thinks | : The tendency of highly cohesive groups to assume that their decisions can not be wrong. |
| Group polarization | : Group produced enhancement of members' preexisting tendencies, a strengthening of the member's average. |
| Group-decision process | : A procedure in which a group is presented with a problem and communication giving the various alternatives, followed by a discussion and decision regarding the solution of the problem. |
| Society | : The complex type of human group composed of many subgroups. |
| Social change | : Alteration in structure of a society. |
| Social cohesion | : Degree to which group members share common beliefs, practices and values and thus act as united. |
| Social conflict | : The clash which arises between two groups in a society in order to obtain control over scarce resources. |
| Social distance | : Degree to which individuals are willing to interact with people from different social backgrounds. |
| Social facilitation | : The tendency of people to perform simple or well-learned tasks better when others are present. |

Social loafing

- : The tendency for people to exert less when they pool their efforts toward a common goal than when they are individually accountable.

2.12 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 3 GROUP BEHAVIOUR: INFLUENCE OF NORMS, STATUS AND ROLES; INTRODUCTION TO CROWD BEHAVIOURAL THEORY, CROWD PSYCHOLOGY (CLASSICAL AND CONVERGENCE THEORIES)

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Human Behaviour in Groups
- 3.3 Influence of Norms, Status and Roles
 - 3.3.1 Salient Features of Norms
- 3.4 Roles
 - 3.4.1 Types of Roles
 - 3.4.2 Salient Features of Roles
- 3.5 Status
 - 3.5.1 Salient Features of Status
 - 3.5.2 Status and Position
- 3.6 Crowd Behavioural Theory
- 3.7 Crowd Psychology
 - 3.7.1 Crowd Behaviour
 - 3.7.2 Classical Theory of Crowd Behaviour
 - 3.7.3 Convergence Theory of Crowd Behaviour
 - 3.7.4 Group Mind
- 3.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.9 Unit End Questions
- 3.10 Glossary
- 3.11 Suggested Readings

3.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will learn about how the behaviour of individuals in a group is governed by norms. We will learn about the definition of norms, influence of norms, definition of Status and Roles and all of their influence on the behaviour of individuals especially in group situations. There will be a description about the important features related to norms, role and status and how these in turn affect the human behaviour in groups. The unit will describe crowd as a group and the individual's behaviour in a crowd situation. Here we will understand how the individual's thinking gets dominated by the crowd's thinking. The unit will deal with crowd psychology and individual's behaviour as explained by certain theories related to crowd behaviour.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Define norms and describe its characteristic features;
- Define status and role in group behaviour;
- Describe how the status and role affects behaviour in groups;
- Explain crowd behaviour; and
- Elucidate the major theories related to crowd behaviour.

3.2 HUMAN BEHAVIOUR IN GROUPS

Human beings behave differently in different situations. When alone the human being's behaviour will be different as compared to the individual's behaviour when in a group. Thus the behaviour of an individual differs from the individual's behaviour in group situations. Generally, in a group situation, a person is expected to behave according to the norms of the group. Group often exerts powerful effects on human being and, accordingly, human being behaves following the norms of the group. Group interaction is a two-way process whereby each individual member in the group stimulates the other and also in varying degrees and thereby modifies the behaviour of the group members. The behaviour and personality characteristics of individual members of a group affect the behaviour of others in the same group. Thus there is a significant impact of each of the members in a group over the functioning of the group as a whole.

We may consider a school situation where all children have a common goal and the students and the teachers are motivated for the achievement of the common goal. School offers excellent opportunities for group dynamics. Now the question may arise how a child behaves in school setting considering the functioning of the school as a social group. The answer is:

- Encouragement in group work:* Group activities should be encouraged which may provide opportunities to the students to participate in the affairs of the group.
- Project work:* Different types of project work may help the students for the development of group consciousness and cooperation.
- Social service:* Social service will help the students to get into direct contact with the community members and to understand the problems of that particular setting.
- Hostel life:* This is an important way of training the students in the art of living together.

From the above four situations one can easily understand the behaviour of human being in individual and group levels. In this context, an important term we can use is 'group dynamics', which implies an interactive psychological relationship in which members of a group develop a common perception based on feelings or emotions. Behaviour of human being is not static. Thus, it can be said that group dynamics means the change of behaviour through interaction in the group.

Generally group dynamics is influenced by sympathy, suggestion and imitation. Sympathy enables the member of a group to perceive the psychological state of other members. He begins to feel as others feel. On the other hand, suggestion plays a big role in influencing individual's group behaviour. It happens that suggestions put forward by the leader of the group are readily accepted. Not only this, the behaviour of the leader of the group is initiated by the members of the group. Thus, it can be said that the influence of norms, status and roles has an important role on group behaviour. In fact, in group behaviour an individual may act in a manner which as an individual he would not like to act, i.e., an individual may be ready to do the meanest of actions if the group wishes him to do.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Discuss human behaviour in groups.

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2) What are the underlying dynamics of human behaviour in groups.

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3) What is group dynamics?

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4) What factors influence group dynamics?

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3.3 INFLUENCE OF NORMS, STATUS AND ROLES

Norms are generally unwritten, unstated rules that govern the behaviour of the members of a group. Norms often just evolve and are socially enforced through social sanctioning. Norms are often passed down through time by a culture or society. Norms are intended to provide stability to a group and only a few in a group will refuse to abide by the norms. A group may hold onto norms that are no longer needed, similar to holding on to bad habits just because they have always been part of the group. Some norms are unhealthy and cause poor communication among people. Often groups are not aware of the unwritten norms that exist. New people to the group have to discover these norms on their own over a period of time and may face sanction just because they did not know a norm existed. At the end of the exercise, I give some actual examples of norms that I have encountered in groups.

The term ‘socialisation’ is the process by which individuals learn the culture of their society. The first and primary socialisation process takes place during infancy, generally within the family. Child learns the language and basic behaviour from the parents and other family members. Then comes the peer group, the young child, by interacting with others and playing childhood games, learns to conform to the accepted ways of a social group. Actually social life is based on some specific rules. Each and every culture contains a large number of guidelines. A norm is a specific guide to action which defines acceptable and appropriate behaviour in particular situations.

Norms are standards of group behaviour. An essential characteristic of group life is that it consists of a set of values and principles which regulate the behaviour of individual members. Groups are the products of interaction among individuals. When a number of individuals interact, a set of standards develop that regulate their relationships and modes of behaviour. The standards of group behaviour are called social norms. “A norm is a standard of behavioural expectation shared by the group members against which the validity of perception is judged and the appropriateness of feeling and behaviour is evaluated” (Secord and Backman, Social Psychology, p.323).

Social norms are those that regulate behaviour of individuals in a group and also act as informal social controls. Certain degree of consensus is present in these norms in that the members of the group follow these norms even though there is nothing written. The norms are maintained by informal social control and are usually based on some degree of consensus and are maintained through social sanctions.

Norms are in another sense rules of behaviour. They exist as both formal and informal norms, but often the latter is found to be more strong and reinforced from time to time and thus are more effective. These informal norms are divided into two:

- *Folkways*: These are expected to be followed, though there is no formal sanction except some kind of reprimands. It’s a kind of adjusting, accommodating type of habits.
- *Mores*: These are also informal rules that are not written, but violation brings severe punishments and sanctions.

There are certain terms that are related to social norms and these include the following: (a) Descriptive norm, (b) Prescriptive norm, (c) Proscriptive norm (d) Deviance, (e) Looking glass self. These are described below.

- a) *A descriptive norm* refers to people's perceptions of what is commonly done in specific situations. This is typically related to a culture.
- b) *A Prescriptive Norm* refers to the unwritten rules understood and followed by society. We do these every day with out thinking about them.
- c) *A Proscriptive Norm* refers to the unwritten rules known to society regarding the individual's behaviour in terms of the do's and don'ts. These norms can vary from culture to culture.
- d) *Deviance* refers to violation of the norms or non conformity to norms by some people or even a single individual. Briefly stated it refers to behaviours that go against norms.
- e) *Looking Glass-Self*: This is how one sees oneself based on how others perceive the person. This comes about in terms of interacting with others and understanding how others perceive them, what they expect from them and how they should behave etc.

Norms affect the way one behaves in public. For instance, when a person enters an elevator (lift), it is expected that you turn around to face the doors. An example of a social norm violation would be to enter the elevator and remain facing the rest of the people.

Human behaviour changes based on social situations that they encounter since the age of 1 or 2 years old.(toddler onwards). Individuals learn to adapt to society by changing their behaviour in order to fit in with the rest of the crowd.

Norms represent value judgments about appropriate behaviour in social situations, and also have powerful influence on individual's behaviour especially in a group situation. Norms in a way guide individual's behaviour and reduces ambiguity in groups.

Groups do not establish norms about every conceivable situation but only with respect to things that are significant to the group. Norms might apply to every member of the group or to only some members. Norms that apply to particular group members usually specify the role of those individuals. Norms vary in the degree to which they are accepted by all members of the group: some are accepted by almost everyone, others by some members and not others. For example, university faculty and students accept the faculty norm of teaching, but students infrequently accept the norm of faculty research. Finally, norms vary in terms of the range of permissible deviation; sanctions, either mild or extreme, are usually applied to people for breaking norms. Norms also differ with respect to the amount of deviation that is tolerated. Some norms require strict adherence, but others do not.

Understanding how group norms develop and why they are enforced is important to managers. Group norms are important determinants of whether a group will be productive. A work group with the norm that its proper role is to help management will be far more productive than one whose norm is to be antagonistic

to management. Managers can play a part in setting and changing norms by helping to set norms that facilitate tasks, assessing whether a group's norms are functional, and addressing counterproductive norms with subordinates.

Norms usually develop slowly as groups learn those behaviours that will facilitate their activities. However, this slow development can be short-circuited by critical events or by a group's decision to change norms. Most norms develop in one or more of four ways: (1) explicit statements by supervisors or coworkers; (2) critical events in the group's history; (3) primacy, or by virtue of their introduction early in the group's history; and (4) carryover behaviours from past situations.

Why are group norms enforced? The most important reason is to ensure group survival. They are also enforced to simplify or make predictable the expected behaviour of group members. That is, they are enforced to help groups avoid embarrassing interpersonal problems, to express the central values of the group, and to clarify what is distinctive about it.

3.3.1 Salient Features of Norms

Some salient features of 'norms' are as follows:

- Norm is a pattern of setting limit on individual behaviour.
- Norms are related to factual world.
- Norms are the important factor in any society.
- Norms are chosen by society.
- Norms influence individual's attitude.
- Norms are formed in matters of consequences to a particular group.
- Norms of some group may pertain to ethical matters.
- Norms implies a sense of obligation.
- Conformity to norms is normal.
- Norms sometimes create conflict.
- Norms are not learned by all persons even in the same society.

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| <p>Self Assessment Questions</p> <p>1) What are norms? Discuss the types of norms.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>2) How do norms influence the behaviour of individuals in group?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> |
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3) What are the characteristic or salient features of norms?

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3.4 ROLES

Another important term we can consider in the context of group is the ‘Role’. Roles help to clarify the responsibilities and obligations of the persons / members belonging to a group. Depending on what kind of a group a person belongs, the role assigned to members will also vary. We find that individuals differ not only in such attributes as sex, height, age, etc. but also differ in respect of their occupations. An individual can not perform all the jobs nor can all the individuals be given the same job.

Thus, role is a pattern of behaviour expected from an individual in a certain group or situation. According to Ogburn and Nimkoff, a role is “a set of socially expected and approved behaviour patterns, consisting of both duties and privileges, associated with a particular position in a group.”

3.4.1 Types of Roles

Some of the types of roles played by the members of the group include the following:

- Information seeker or giver
- Opinion seeker or giver
- Listener
- Harmoniser
- Compromiser
- Analyser
- Standard setter.

3.4.2 Salient Features of Roles

Some salient features regarding ‘role’ are as follows:

- Role refers to the obligations which an individual has towards his group.
- Generally roles are assigned in a formal manner.
- Roles are acquired, people often internalise them.
- People link their roles to key aspects of their self-concept and self-perceptions.
- Roles help to clarify the responsibilities and obligations of the persons belonging to a group.

- Although roles serve an important function in the effective functioning of groups, they can sometimes exert negative as well as positive effects.
- Group members sometimes experience role conflict – sometimes there seems to be indication of incompatibility between the roles they play.
- Roles are a series of rights and duties – they represent reciprocal relations among individuals.
- Roles in modern society are numerous, complex and highly diversified.
- Social roles regulate and organise our behaviour.
- Roles provide social life with order and predictability.
- Interacting in terms of the respective roles, teacher and student know what to do and how to do it.

3.5 STATUS

Besides norms and roles, another significant term we can use in this context, i.e., “status”. Status is used to designate the comparative amount of prestige, difference or respect accorded to persons who have been assigned different roles in a group or community. It is well known that the status or social standing or ranking within a group is a serious matter for many persons. Status is an important factor in the functioning of groups.

3.5.1 Salient Features of Status

Some salient features of ‘status’ are as follows:

- Different roles or positions in a group are associated with different levels of status.
- Status is the worth of a person as estimated by a group or a class of persons.
- Status is a position recognised and supported by the entire society.
- Status is a position in a social group or grouping.
- Status means the location of the individual within the group.
- Status is the social network of reciprocal obligations, privileges, rights and duties.
- Status is the social position that determines for its possessor.
- Status refers to an individual’s total standing in society.
- Status and role are two sides of single coin, viz., a social position, rights and duties and actual behaviour expressing them.
- Status system is a universal characteristic of human society.
- Group often confer or withhold status as a means of influencing the behaviour of the members.

3.5.2 Status and Position

Status is the honor attached to one’s position in a society. It may also refer to a rank or position that one holds in a group, for example son or daughter, playmate, pupil, etc. This social status can be determined in two ways: (i) Earn social status by one’s own achievement (ii) by inheritance. As for the latter, that is

status through inheritance it may be stated that a person may be given high status because he or she has been born and belongs to a very renowned family in a society. At the same time another may have a low status because he or she is born in a minority group which is considered poor from all aspects, economic, education, gender and culture. Occupation of a doctor, Engineer and educationist is higher than occupations of a mechanic, sweeper, shop keeper of a small shop etc. Thus occupations also decide the status that an individual will have in a society.

Norms are influenced by the status of the group. If all members in the group have equal status the norm formation will be smooth and unanimous. Differential status of group members will lead to conflicts and one-up-manship and thus affect adversely the unanimous decision regarding norms.

3.6 CROWD BEHAVIOURAL THEORY

Crowd is a physically compact organisation of human beings brought into direct, temporary and unorganised contact with one another. If some people stand together for a short time at any place, then it may be called crowd. The crowd is the most transitory and unstable of all the social groups. Actually crowd exhibits no patterns, no characteristic expressions. The collection of human beings in the market or in the open space is also designated as crowd.

MacIver defines crowd as “A physically compact aggregation of human beings brought into direct, temporary and unorganised contact with one another”. According to Kimball Young, “A crowd is a gathering of a considerable number of persons around a centre or point of common attraction”. According to Majumder, “A crowd is an aggregation of individuals drawn together by an interest without premeditation on the part of any of them and without even tentative provision of what to expect”.

Crowd behaviour involves three aspects:

- i) psychological continuity,
- ii) polarization of interest and attention and
- iii) transition and temporary character.

A crowd collects because of some particular curiosity, interest and other temporary causes and dissolves as many as its cause vanishes. If two people start fighting on the road, a crowd will collect and when they stop their struggle, it will break up.

Crowd can be divided into two classes:

- a) Active and
 - b) Inactive.
- a) **Active crowd** can be further classified into four classes, viz., aggressive, panicky, acquisitive, and expressive crowd. Let us see what these are.
 - 1) *Aggressive crowd*: It is a crowd of people in an aggressive and destructive frame of mind, capable of any and every act of destruction and irrationality, brutality and inhumanity. This kind of crowd exhibits a tremendous excitement.

- 2) *Panicky crowd*: Panicky crowd is the panicky or fear-stricken crowd whose constituent members are almost overwhelmed with fear to a point where they can no longer think and find reason. They are almost frightened out of their wits, so that thinking is for the time being suspended. They are concerned with the prime quest of saving their lives.
 - 3) *Acquisitive crowd*: The aim and objective of each of its members is to obtain or acquire something. Acquisitive crowd is composed almost entirely of individuals whose objectives is to gain or obtain something, be it a cinema ticket, kerosene oil etc.
 - 4) *Expressive crowd*: In this kind of crowd some people gathered to give expression or to manifest their demands or sentiments. Desire of violence is relatively less pronounced and dominant in the members of an expressive crowd.
- b) **Inactive crowd**: No crowd is completely inactive. The difference between an active and inactive crowd is only relative. The inactive crowd even resembles an audience.

You may join in a crowd, where you can find some special characteristics:

- Crowd has no predetermined aim.
- There is no definite time and place for crowd.
- It is a congregate group of individuals who have temporarily identified themselves with common interest.
- It seems that members are motivated by emotions and soon become uncontrollable.
- The behaviour of crowd is not certain.
- People within the crowd stimulate each other.
- Members of the crowd are generally uncontrolled, unorganised and disordered.
- Members are motivated by emotions and soon become uncontrollable.
- The curiosity, values and emotions are temporarily identical and which arises because of common interest.

Immersed in the crowd, the individual loses self-control and may engage in different types of activities. Crowd behaviour arises as a result of the three mechanisms, namely anonymity, contagion and suggestibility (Le Bon, 1895).

Dollard (1939) used the frustration-aggression hypothesis to explain the violent behaviour of crowds.

Turner (1964) explained crowd behaviour in terms of “emergent norms”. The contagion, the spread of the feelings and actions is facilitated by the process of mixing, the close proximity, the jostling like the sheep in the herd.

Generally in crowd people of varying interests and abilities converge because they share some common quality like hostility, aggressiveness etc.

3.7 CROWD PSYCHOLOGY

Crowd psychology mainly refers to the studies and theories regarding the behaviour of the crowd and also the psychological causes and effects of crowd participation. In a study entitled, “The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind (1895)”, Le Bon suggested that when people become part of a crowd they lose almost all of their individuality, autonomy and personal judgment and morality. According to Carl Jung, it is called “collective unconscious”. Convergence theory emerged during the twentieth century, thinking that acts of the crowd is in unified way, not because of the collective ‘mind’ of the crowd but because they tend to be composed of like minded people who are attracted into the crowd situation because of a shared interest or objective.

3.7.1 Crowd Behaviour

Neither the socio-psychological processes that take place within the crowd nor the techniques employed by the crowd leader provide an adequate understanding of the peculiarities of crowd behaviour. Some of them are as follows :

In the crowd, with the loss of individuality, a form of group consciousness develops, a fusion of mind with mind, a sympathetic participation on emotional level which is common to all the participants. Appeals, slogans are the common features.

Crowd behaviour is the release of repressed drives. The suggestibility, the exaltation, the lack of self-consciousness, the egoistic expansion and spontaneity, exhibited by the members of the crowd are phenomena susceptible to this kind of explanation.

We may think of the crowd as a temporary collectivity within which thwarted impulses are afforded an outlet. The close connection between the underlying characteristics of the cultural conditions and the types of crowd those are apt to mark the community life.

The manifestations of crowd feeling deserve study not only because they reveal the significance of this transitory form of aggregation, but also because they throw light on other social phenomena.

3.7.2 Classical Theory of Crowd Behaviour

The minds of the group would merge to form a way of thinking. Le Bon’s idea is that crowd foster anonymity and sometimes generate emotion. Different individuals in a group do not think individually but they think, experience and act through the group mind. When individuals collect in a crowd, their individual mind becomes a part of the collective mind. The collective mind thinks in its own way and formulates its own ideas and thoughts which the individual minds do not formulate their individual capacities. Emphasis was given on unconscious motives. According to him, in a crowd these unconscious motives get more active. The individual is influenced by these unconscious motives and his own conscious motivation sinks into the background.

3.7.3 Convergence Theory of Crowd Behaviour

Crowd behaviour is not a product of the crowd itself, but is carried into the crowd by particular individuals. According to convergence theory people who

wish to act in a certain way come together to form crowds. There is no homogenous activity within a repetitive practice. This theory states that crowd itself does not generate racial hatred or violence. Actually, crowd arises from convergence of people who oppose the presence of particular group of neighbours. Generally people in crowd express existing beliefs and values so that mob reaction is the rational product of widespread popular feeling.

Actually, Group-mind theory has been advocated by Lebon, Espinas, Trotter, Durkheim, Mc. Dougall and Allport.

According to this theory, the individual in the crowd loses his / her individuality and becomes a part of the crowd which goes on to develop its own crowd consciousness. The mentality of the individual member becomes de-individualised and he begins to act on an emotional level which is common to all the participants. Its working is based on emotions, slogans, appeals and suggestions. Its actions are less rational and more emotional. It becomes easily excited and acts in a hypnotic way.

3.7.4 Group Mind

Lebon was the first writer to put forward the theory of group-mind in 1892. According to him, the sentiments and ideas of all the persons in the gathering take one and the same direction and their conscious personality vanishes. Different individuals in a group do not think individually but think, experience and act through the group mind. When individuals collect in a crowd, their individual minds become a part of the collective mind. Lebon has laid great emphasis on the unconscious motives. The individual is influenced by the unconscious motives and his own conscious motivation sinks into the background.

Espinas calls group mind as social consciousness. According to him, there is a sort of self-consciousness in every group. Collective consciousness is formed out of the collection of many individuals consciousness taken together.

According to Trotter, everyman is possessed of the instinct of gregariousness. Man's gregariousness activates his mental system as a result of which he accepts the command of the group without any argument and acts according to the command given.

Durkheim has sought to explain group behaviour in terms of collective consciousness. According to him, when people collect in a group, a collective consciousness is created by the mutual exchange of ideas and notions. Actually mind is another name for the flow of consciousness. Social consciousness is a compound of several individual consciousness but its qualities are different from the qualities of the consciousness of the individual.

According to Mc.Dougall, every group has a mind of its own. The group mind is not a mere collection of the minds of all the individual members of group. The group mind has the power of influencing the mind of the individuals. It is because of this power of the group mind that the thinking of the individual changes when he becomes a member of the group.

According to Allport, the behaviour of the individual in the crowd is influenced by two processes of social facilitation and inter-stimulation. Members of the

group motivate each other. Social facilitation and inter-stimulation curb the reasoning capacity of the individuals and increase their suggestibility.

Sometimes crowd behaviour may be the expression of impulses repressed or thwarted by the conditions and social controls of everyday life, but it may not be true of all the crowds. In a crowd all the differences of high and low, rich and poor are submerged and all act as one man. We can say that crowd behaviour is learned. In a crowd the individual responsibility is blotted out. De-individualisation of the individuals in the group leads to reduction of inner restraint and to more expressive behaviour.

Public and Crowd : The public and the crowd have something in common. Both are collectivities of people and are generally organised. But there exists some differences. First, there is physical contact among the members of a crowd, where as public is scattered at several places. Second, public is much bigger group than the crowd. Third, the stimulus in the crowd is simultaneous; on the other hand, stimulus in the public is diffused. The crowd is more suggestible than the public. Thus, we can say that the behaviour of the crowd and public vary in different way.

3.8 LET US SUM UP

It is true that group often exerts powerful effects upon their members. In this context three important aspects are role, status and norms. Different persons performed different tasks and they were expected to accomplish different things for the group. They fulfill different roles. Generally roles are assigned in a formal manner. Group may choose a person as leader and others as follower. Roles are acquired and people internalise them. They link their roles to key aspects to their self-concept and self-perception. A role may exert profound effects on a person's behaviour. Besides role, another important factor in functioning of group is status. It is social standing or rank within a group. Different roles or position in a group is linked with wide range of desirable outcomes. Group often confer or withhold status, as a means of influencing the behaviour of their members. Another powerful factor which has significant impact on group is norm. The rules may be implicit or explicit, established by groups to regulate the behaviour of their members. In many situations, norms tell group members how to behave or how not to behave. Generally group insists upon adherence to their norms as a basic requirement for membership. Groups influence their members through roles, i.e., members' assigned functions in the group; status, i.e., their relative standing in the group and norms, i.e., rules concerning appropriate behaviour for members, and lastly, cohesiveness, i.e., all the factors that cause members to remain in the group. In this context another important term we can use, i.e., "crowd". A crowd is a gathering of a considerable number of persons around a centre or point of common attraction. Crowd is a temporary, direct and unorganised group of individuals whose curiosity, values and emotions are temporarily identical and which arise because of common interest or common stimuli. According to the "group-mind theory", the individual in the crowd loses his individuality and becomes a part of the crowd which comes to develop its own crowd consciousness. Like-minded people, who are attracted into the crowd situation, have a shared interest or object, which is based on convergence theory.

3.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you mean by the term crowd? Discuss its characteristics.
- 2) Elucidate briefly about the influence of roles on group behaviour.
- 3) Briefly discuss about the classical and convergence theory.
- 4) What do you mean by the term “norm”? Describe its impact on group.
- 5) Elucidate briefly the relationship between status and group.

3.10 GLOSSARY

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| Communication | : The exchange of meaning and mutual influence. |
| Cohesiveness | : With respect to conformity, the degree of attraction felt by an individual toward an influencing group. |
| Crowd | : Aggregation of people in close proximity who share some common interest |
| Crowd psychology | : Crowd psychology mainly refers to the studies and theories regarding the behaviour of the crowd and also the psychological causes and effects of crowd participation. |
| Group | : A collection of individuals who are in interdependent relationship with one another sharing common norm of behaviour and attitude. |
| Group structure | : The difference of roles and status relations within a group. |
| Group decision process | : A procedure in which a group is presented with a problem and communication giving the various alternatives, followed by a discussion and decision regarding the solution of the problem. |
| Roles | : The sets of behaviour that individuals occupying specific position within a group are expected to perform. |
| Role expectations | : Anticipations that is associated with a role category. |
| Role strain | : Difficulties in attempting to enact a role. |
| Social norm | : An expectation shared by group members which specifies behaviour considered appropriate for a given situation. |

3.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

Baron, R.A. and Byrne, D. (2000), *Social Psychology*, 8th Edition, Prentice Hall of India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi – 110001.

Kuppuswamy, B. (1980), *An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 2nd Revised edition, (reprinted, 2004), Asia Publishing House, Mumbai.

UNIT 4 CROWD PSYCHOLOGY: COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS AND COLLECTIVE HYSTERIA

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Crowd: Definition and Characteristics
 - 4.2.1 Crowd Psychology: Definition and Characteristics
- 4.3 Collective Behaviour
 - 4.3.1 Mass Society
 - 4.3.2 Audience
 - 4.3.3 Mob
 - 4.3.4 Fashion
- 4.4 Collective Hysteria
- 4.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.6 Unit End Questions
- 4.7 Glossary
- 4.8 Suggested Readings

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The crowd is the most transitory and unstable of all the social groups. Crowd belongs to the category of unorganised groups. This does not indicate that crowd exhibits no patterns, no characteristic expressions but in relation to other organised groups, the units in it are not organised. In this unit we will be dealing with the concept of crowd, its definition, its characteristics, the manner in which it is formed, etc. We will also learn about what happens to an individual when the person is part of a crowd. How does the behaviour of individual in a group differs from that of the behaviour of the same individual in a crowd. We will also learn about the active and inactive crowds and the typical crowd behaviour exhibited.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Define crowd;
- Describe crowd characteristics;
- Explain crowd psychology;
- Analyse crowd behaviour;
- Describe collective behaviour in terms of crowd behaviour; and
- Analyse collective hysteria in terms of crowd psychology.

4.2 CROWD: DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

Crowd is defined as a large number of persons gathered together. It is a group of people united by a common characteristic, as age, interest, or vocation.

Examples of different types of gathering which are called crowd:

- 1) A group of people attending a public function.
- 2) An audience attending theatre witnessing a play.
- 3) A large number of things positioned or considered together.

It is the physically compact aggregation of human being where direct, temporary and organised contact with one another exists. This relationship is quickly created and quickly dissolved. Numbers are necessary to make a crowd, though there is variation from crowd to crowd, and numbers are only randomly thrown together in physical proximity. Not only this, crowd differs from such groups as the assembly, public meeting, reception etc. where the participants fall into a predetermined order and are arranged to some principle of selection.

There are mainly two types of crowd:

- a) The 'like interest' crowd and
- b) The 'common interest' crowd.

The 'like interest' crowd has no common purpose. There is a common external focus of interest but not a common interest. The like interest crowd can do nothing as a crowd. On the other hand, the crowds of this sort are not necessarily antagonistic to the established order. It also differs from the general crowd which has certain characteristics such as certain unique psychological qualities. Crowds also differ greatly on the psychological level according to the character of the interest which pervades them. The full significance of crowd sentiment is seen more clearly in the behaviour of the 'common interest' crowd, wherein there is always a "cause" that leads the person concerned to identify himself with all the rest.

The aggregation of individuals becomes a crowd only when the sentiments and ideas of all the persons in the gathering take one and the same direction, and their conscious personality vanishes. Crowds are not premeditative, they are impulsive and mobile. The causes which determine the appearance of the characteristics of the crowd are:

- a) sentiment of invisible power
- b) suggestion and
- c) contagion.

Once the crowd is assembled, there grows a spontaneous accumulation of excitement and a "sympathetic induction". The symptoms and expressions of emotions come to each constituent member as a collective influence and heighten the feeling in each individual.

Crowds are defined by their shared emotional experiences, but masses are defined by their interpersonal isolation.

Crowd is the most transitory and unstable group among the other social groups. Crowd exhibits no pattern, no characteristic expression, but the unit in it is not organised in relation to one another.

Crowd differs from other types of gatherings. There are myriads of casual meetings of friends, acquaintances or strangers taking place at all times in every society, on the street, on the train, in the office, in the market place and so forth. These unorganised meetings differ from crowds because they are, sociologically as well as psychologically face to face meetings and they take place on a much smaller scale. Numbers are necessary to make a crowd although there are variations. Besides this, crowd differs from such groups as the assembly, public meeting, reception and so on, where the participants fall into a pre determined order and are arranged according to some principle of selection.

Characteristics of a crowd

- A human being acts in a very different manner when in a crowd as compared to when the individual is alone in isolation. The conscious individuality vanishes in the unconscious personality of the crowd.
- Material contact is not absolutely necessary.
- Passions and sentiments, provoked by certain events, are often sufficient to create it.
- The collective mind, momentarily formed, represents a very special kind of aggregate.
- Its chief peculiarity is that it is entirely dominated by unconscious elements.
- It is subject to a peculiar collective logic.
- Possesses infinite credulity and exaggerated sensibility.
- There is a certain degree of shortsightedness amongst the members of the crowd.
- There is also some degree of incapacity to respond to the influences of reason.
- Affirmation, contagion, repetition, and prestige constitute almost the only means of persuading the members in a crowd.
- Reality and experience have no effect upon them.
- The crowd will admit anything.
- Nothing is impossible in the eyes of the crowd.
- The sensibility of crowds, their sentiments, good or bad, are always exaggerated. These characteristics show that a person in the crowd descends to a very low degree in the scale of civilisation.
- In the intellectual domain a crowd is always inferior to the isolated unit.
- A crowd will commit a crime as readily as an act of abnegation.
- Personal characteristics vanish in the crowd. For example in a crowd, a miser becomes generous, the skeptic a believer, the honest man a criminal, the coward a hero.

- One of the most notable consequences of the influence of a crowd is the unification of their sentiments and wills. This psychological unity confers a remarkable force upon crowds.
- In a crowd, gestures and actions are extremely contagious. Acclamations of hatred, fury, or love are immediately approved and repeated.
- They are propagated by contagion, but a point of departure is necessary before this contagion can take effect.
- Without a leader the crowd is an amorphous entity incapable of action.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Define crowd and put forward the various definitions and concept of crowd.

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2) Describe the characteristic features of a crowd

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3) How is crowd behaviour of an individual different from the behaviour of the individual when alone.

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4) Discuss how crowd is different from other types of social gatherings?

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4.2.1 Crowd Psychology: Definition and Characteristics

Crowd psychology refers to studies and theories in connection with the behaviour of crowds and of the people within them. It also studies the psychological causes and effects of crowd behaviour. Neither the socio psychological processes that take place within the crowd nor the techniques employed by the crowd leader provide, in themselves, an adequate understanding of the peculiarities of crowd behaviour.

- **Crowds are spontaneous**

The most common myth about crowds is that they are spontaneous and in quite a few cases they are the places from violence erupts. In a crowd there is generally a chaos.

Mixed crowds, which we normally come across in public matches, sports etc., are in fact usually peaceful and only engage in stereotypical crowd behaviour, as for instance whistling and clapping, face painting, singing and shouting depending on the occasion.

In reality most people will go to almost any length to avoid actual violence, whether they are in a crowd or not.

- **Crowds are suggestible**

People in crowds have heightened suggestibility. They are said to copy each other, they look for a leader, etc. They are open to the suggestion of others.

If there is some truth to the idea that people in crowds are suggestible, no one has managed to demonstrate it empirically.

- **Crowds are irrational**

Most crowds react without thinking. They are basically irrational. One type of irrationality frequently attributed to crowds is panic. When there is an emergency situation like fire in an auditorium, the individuals in that crowd suddenly behave in the most selfish manner almost like animals and in the process of trying to escape first, they cause considerable harm to other people and to property. Sometimes in their panic stricken stage, they may even neglect their own children. Faced by emergency situations people are thought to suddenly behave like selfish animals, trampling others in the scramble to escape.

Research studies are innumerable in this area, namely in real emergency situations, but the findings from these studies do not support the above idea. Two examples are studies on underground station evacuations and the rapid, orderly way in which people evacuated the World Trade Center after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Many lives were saved that day because people resisted the urge to panic. Resisting the urge to irrationality, or panic, is the norm.

- **Crowds increase anonymity**

A less common myth, but still popular is the idea that people become more anonymous when they are in a crowd. This anonymity is said to feed into spontaneity and even destructiveness, helping to make crowds violent, dangerous places in which society's laws are transgressed.

Everyday experience, though, is that people usually travel in groups, with their family or friends, and so are not anonymous at all. Research confirms this, for example one study from the 70s found that most people at a football match were with one or more friends. Later research has repeated this finding.

- **Crowds are emotional**

Less widespread myth is that the crowds are thought by some to be particularly emotional. It is argued that increased emotionality is linked to irrationality and perhaps violence.

Modern psychological research, though, does not see the emotions as separate to decision-making, but rather as an integral part. To talk about an 'emotional crowd' as opposed to a 'rational crowd', therefore, does not make sense. People in crowds make their decisions with input from their emotions, just as they do when they're not in a crowd.

- **Crowds are unanimous**

Few of the sociology textbooks endorse the myth of unanimity, but the idea does appear that when people are together they tend to act in unison. Research suggests, though, that this is rarely the case and that people remain stubbornly individual.

- **Crowds are destructive**

The least common myth in the sociology textbooks, but quite a strong cultural stereotype of crowds, is that they are destructive. This is closely related to the myth of spontaneity and is often connected to violence.

Again Schweingruber and Wohlstein find that research shows violence in crowds is extremely rare. And what violence does occur is normally carried out by a small minority, that is, these are the people that make it on to the news

Crowd psychology is a phenomenon that is understood to be a part of the broader study of social psychology. The basic concept of crowd psychology is that the thought processes and behaviour patterns of the individual often vary from those of a larger group, although these same individuals often adapt to the expectations of the surrounding culture and modify individual traits in order to identify with the crowd. Different theories of crowd psychology focus on both the conscious and subconscious ways that individuals align with the crowd mentality.

Most theories of crowd behaviour agree that the peculiar manifestation of crowd is the expressions of impulses repressed or thwarted by the conditions and social controls of everyday life. The close connection between the underlying characteristics of the cultural conditions and the types of crowd that is apt to mark to community life. The manifestation of crowd feeling deserve study not only because they reveal the significance of this transitory form of aggregation, but also because they throw light on other social phenomenon. Crowd offers a special opportunity for the emergence of herd sentiment. Communication is an essential process in social life. Tremendous increase of the technical facilities of communication, in recent times, in conjuncture with other changes, has brought into the modern scene new problems and new potentialities in the area of collective behaviour.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Define crowd psychology and indicate the components of crowd psychology

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2) What are the characteristic features of crowd psychology?

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3) Why does an individual behave differently in a crowd situation?

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4) What is meant by herd sentiment?

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4.3 COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOUR

All social interaction is collective behaviour. When two or more persons behave in the same way, it may be termed as 'collective behaviour'. Any religious congregation may be called collective behaviour. Collective behaviour brings people into contact with others in situations where conventional guidelines and formal authority fail to afford direction and supply channels for action. Social unrest may be both the cause and effect of collective behaviour. It may sometimes lead to the emergence of new norms and generally accepted policies. The agitated crowds can develop into disciplined association. Collective behaviour may act as an agent of flexibility and as a forerunner of social change.

Some special features of collective behaviour are:

- It takes place in occasional episodes rather than regularly or routinely.
- It is not regulated by any particular set of rules or procedures.
- It is generally guided by unreasoning beliefs, hopes, fears or hatreds.
- It is unpredictable.

Generally we can say that social life is a system of well-structured and stable relationships. It is characterised by change rather than stability, uncertainty rather than predictability, disorganisation rather than equilibrium. Collective behaviour entails a crisis or a break in regular routines. Collective behaviour may be an agent of flexibility and social movements and revolutions fall under the category of collective behaviour. A crowd may be said to be more stable than a mob. Under conditions of stress or danger, a crowd may quickly turn into a mob. Crowd may include mob behaviour as well as audience behaviour. Casual crowd is short in time, has loosely organised collectivity that may be motivated by the attraction of the movement. A group of people may collect together when there is an accident on the road. On the other hand, there is a conventional crowd which is directed by conventional rules like collection of people in religious festivals.

4.3.1 Mass Society

Mass society is characterised by rationality, impersonal relations, extreme specialisation of roles and loneliness for the individual in spite of concentration of sheer numbers and loss of sense of intimacy and security. In such gatherings, society's suggestion, persuasion, propaganda and other aspects of crowd behaviour are common. (Young, 1948). The modern cities are changing rapidly. It consists of millions of human beings. Personal contacts among the people are reducing day by day. The loss of personal relationship creates a sense of insecurity, loneliness and incompleteness. To overcome these problems, they engage in voluntary organisation, associations and clubs etc. and also affiliate themselves with one or the other of the ashrams. Another significant feature of mass society, with its desire for crowd contacts, is irrationality, susceptibility to propaganda and advertisement. Technological progress and impersonality are based on rational grounds. The sense of insecurity and sense of loneliness makes the individual irrational. In the mass society there is a mixture of rational and irrational thing.

4.3.2 Audience

Audience is a polarized crowd which assembles in one place. It is an index of mental unity. There may be two types of audience, viz., (i) casual audience and (ii) scheduled audience. A number of people may congregate and become polarized by seeing a street quarrel and it is called casual audience. On the other hand, the crowd which assembles in a lecture hall or cinema hall, may be called scheduled audience. In the audience situation several psychological processes are involved in the interaction of people. This interaction may be of two types, viz., i) between audience and speaker or actor, and ii) among the member of the audience themselves.

The aim of audience is varied.. One of the aims is to get facts and interpretations. We can also observe some emotional appeals among audience. Sometimes it may be conversational. As for example we can say that the dramatic troupe or

the musician will have to build up rapport with the audience so that the audience appreciates and enjoys the music or the program. If it is unfavourable, then it the audience can or may become aggressive depending on the theme and performance at the theater. Group singing breaks down the individual isolation, removes differences in social status and helps to build up common emotions and feelings.

4.3.3 Mob

The term “mob mentality” is used to refer to unique behavioural characteristics which emerge when people are in large groups. It is also referred to as herd behaviour and crowd hysteria. The term ‘mob’ refers to a disorganised, aggressive or panicked group of people who are rather irrational and illogical in their thinking. It appears as if they have lost the capacity to think rationally. Social psychologists who study group behaviour tend to study the mob mentality as the subject is quite fascinating. The data obtained is an analysis of situations which range from evacuations gone awry to the moment when demonstrations turn violent.

Social psychologists and animal psychologists do study behaviours related to a group or herd as the term refers to. Psychologists have been studying and observing amongst animals the behaviour of flocks, herds, gaggles, pods, kindles, and other assortments of animals for thousands of years. However only in the early part of the 20th century, the observers started applying scientific approach and theories to such behaviours of animals and also humans.

Mob mentality refers to the behaviour of a group of people which has got out of control. We have been hearing about Kumbh Mela where year after year large numbers of people get trampled and this kind of behaviour of humans is referred to as mob mentality. The rational human being suddenly turns very selfish and becomes only concerned with self and thus unmindful of what is happening to others, he tries to escape the situation by causing considerable harm and damage to other humans. Such instances are typical examples of the desperate actions of people who involve themselves during a period of intense arousal. Such persons may mob trucks with relief supplies, trample each other at some ‘mela’ or theater, or riot in the streets in response to resource scarcity or a perceived scarcity.

However, “mob mentality” is about more than just crowds which have gotten out of control. The field of psychology is very interested in the ways in which human behaviour changes in response to new social situations. People behave very differently in small groups of individuals than they do in big crowds, and their behaviour in crowds is affected by a wide variety of factors.

The study of group behaviour can analyse situations to see where, when, and why they went wrong. Stock market crashes, for example, can be precipitated by mob mentality, as people start to panic in response to fluctuating markets.

The study of crowds has also been used to study grim topics like the rise of anti sikh riots that erupted when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated. Similarly immediately following partition in India, the riots between Muslims and Hindus which broke out when India was partitioned. Psychologists hope that by studying mob mentality and crowd behaviour, they can prevent such events from recurring.

Mob is again another type of crowd. Generally, the members of a mob tend to show a similarity in feelings, thoughts and actions irrespective of the variation

in education, occupation and intelligence. The members of the mob are attending to and reacting to some common object in a common way. Sometimes heightened emotionality is a characteristic feature of mob behaviour. The significant features are anger, fear, joy etc. Sometimes they become unreasonable, intolerant and fickle-minded. Most common characteristic of the mob behaviour is the diminished sense of responsibility. They are generally irresponsible in their behaviours. For instance, an aggressive mob may do some unfortunate things such as breaking or damaging public property and damaging buses, trains and burning things which they will not do at an individual level. Being part of the mob they indulge in all those activities and happenings. Not only this, they get a sense of autonomy which is a typical characteristic feature of the mob. Suggestion, imitation and sympathy are the three mechanisms of interaction which we can observe in the mob behaviour. It can further be said that mob behaviour is due to the operation of a number of factors, some of which depend upon the predisposition of the individuals and characteristics of the situation in which the collectivity finds itself. Mob behaviour is conditioned by so many factors including past as well as present factors, social as well as individual factors.

4.3.4 Fashion

Fashion is an important example of collective action and it is common with crowd behaviour. Fashion is a variation that is permissible within limits of custom. Fashion as well as fads and crazes are based on the desire for change, the desire for something new. There is a psychological reaction and it is part of the outgrowth of emotional and irrational tendencies. It can further be said that fashion sometimes furnishes the desire of conformity, security and social solidarity. Social movements are collective efforts to change the society. Some movements are local, some are national and others are international. The term 'collective behaviour' is now used as 'audience behaviour', 'mob behaviour', 'social movement' etc.

4.4 COLLECTIVE HYSTERIA

Collective hysteria is a phenomenon in which a group of people simultaneously exhibit similar hysterical symptoms. It involves some physical effects, such as headache, nausea, dizziness etc. Actually the term is mainly used to refer to any mass delusion, in which a group of people become governed by some irrational belief or panic. Collective hysteria is most common in small, close knit communities, specially the group who are isolated. Actually, collective hysteria has been documented since ancient times, though it was not understood until recently as a socio psychological phenomenon rather than a supernatural one. Throughout history, collective hysteria has frequently been the cause of moral panics that resulted in widespread rioting and even torture and executions. It remains mysterious and disturbing and those who have been subject to collective hysteria do not always find the modern psychological explanation sufficient.

Sometimes it happens that only a single man or woman can induce fear and anxiety in many of the other male or female group members, even if there is no apparent cause. If only when a person becomes upset or stressed, some of the other members of the group will begin to show tremendous amount of anxiety and fear such that they respond in a like wise manner.

Another aspect of collective hysteria is the rumours that start floating. Rumors start from simple facts or suppositions and as they spread become elaborated into stories of great emotional significance. Gossip is one of the chief ways in which rumors spread in rural as well as urban areas. It has been found that rumors spread very rapidly in times of crisis. When there is a threat of war many rumors break out. Sometimes these rumors may be deliberately created; the motive is to create a crisis and social unrest. Generally rumors have two characteristics, viz., its importance and its ambiguity. When it concerns some events or deeds of important individuals or important groups then there is a great amount of ego-involvement. The aroused anxiety in the individual gets transmitted to the other individuals whom the person meets. Another important characteristic of rumor is that the whole situation is vague and ambiguous. Rumors will not spread if people have factual information in which they have full confidence.

4.5 LET US SUM UP

Generally, in a crowd, individuals excite the thoughts and actions of their fellow beings and are influenced by them. It can also be said that self confidence of individuals increases manifold because they have a sense of mass strength. One essential characteristic of a crowd is the gathering of sufficient persons at one place. It is the psychological characteristics of crowd that distinguishes and differentiates its behaviour from that of an individual in isolation. It is due to them that emotion, rather than thought, circulate rapidly through a crowd. In a crowd due to increased suggestibility, the experience of mass strength etc., people do not retain their sense of responsibility and behave differently which is quite different from their personality and usual behaviour. People lose their capacity for reflection, their emotions grow excited and powerful, and they tend to do or say what they are told by another, without thinking about it. According to Freud and other psychoanalysts, the conduct of the crowd is governed by the unconscious impulses of persons. Due to absence of inhibitions the repressed tendencies are excited and persons behave like insane beings. The emotions and the ideas of the crowd change rapidly. Every thought and excitement moves through the crowd like a contagious disease. Fear, anger, sorrow, delight etc., circulate very rapidly in a crowd because of the increased suggestibility of its members. A crowd loses its capacity to differentiate between moral and immoral or good or bad. It can be said from the psychological analysis of the behaviour of crowd that man's behaviour in a crowd is driven or governed by instincts, sentiments and emotions. The person's suggestibility, sentimentality and emotionality are heightened and intensified and his unconscious impulses are given free reign. A crowd is excessively emotional, impulsive, fickle, inconsistent and extreme in its actions, extremely suggestible, careless in deliberation, hasty in judgment, suffers from a lack of self consciousness, is devoid of self respect and a sense of responsibility. In this context it can be said that collective behaviour is that type of social behaviour which is unpredictable, which is not regulated by any set of rules or procedures and is guided by unreasoning beliefs, hopes, fears and hatreds. It can further be said that collective hysteria is a phenomena in which a group of people simultaneously exhibit similar hysterical symptoms. It is a mass delusion, in which a group of people become governed by irrational beliefs or moral panic.

4.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Define crowd and bring out its characteristic features.
- 2) What are the various characteristics of crowd behaviour?
- 3) How is crowd different from other gatherings?
- 4) What do you mean by the term crowd psychology?
- 5) Describe the significant features of crowd psychology with suitable examples.
- 6) What is collective behaviour? How is it different from individual behaviour?
- 7) What is collective hysteria? Elucidate this concept with suitable examples.
- 8) Write in detail about the mass society highlighting its characteristic features.

4.7 GLOSSARY

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| Attitude | : An enduring system of evaluations or feeling in favour of or against a person or group. |
| Audience | : A group of persons who have assembled to see a picture or to listen a lecture. |
| Cohesiveness | : The social force which keeps the group together. It is a product of the attractiveness to the interaction with group members. |
| Collective behaviour | : Social behaviour that does not follow an organised pattern of conventions and expectations like group behaviour. Collective behaviour is unstructured and therefore unpredictable. |
| Communication | : The exchange of meaning and mutual influence. |
| Crowd | : Aggregation of people in close proximity who share some common interest. |
| Crowd psychology | : Crowd psychology mainly refers to the studies and theories regarding the behaviour of the crowd and also the psychological causes and effects of crowd participation |
| Group | : A collection of individuals who are in interdependent relationship with one another sharing common norms of behaviour and attitude, i.e., two or more people interact and influence one another. |
| Group- decision process | : A procedure in which a group is presented with a problem and communication giving the various alternatives, followed by a discussion and decision regarding the solution of the problem. |
| Group dynamics | : The way in which changes take place in the behaviour of other members of the group. |

UNIT 1 DEFINITION OF NORMS, SOCIAL NORMS, NEED AND CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF NORMS

Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Norms
 - 1.2.1 Meaning of Norms
 - 1.2.2 Types of Norms
 - 1.2.3 Violation of Social Norms
- 1.3 Need and Importance of Social Norms
- 1.4 Characteristic Features of Social Norms
- 1.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.6 Unit End Questions
- 1.7 Suggested Readings and References

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Social norms are the informal, often unspoken rules, guides and standards of behaviour which people in that society follow with great care. These social norms are generally internalised during the process of socialisation and produces guilt, shame etc when they are violated. Though there is no identifiable formal authority who will enforce compliance to norms, the communal sanction for violation of norms can be swift and harsh. These norms are followed and fulfilled in general because failure to do so induces feelings of guilt or shame, gossip, shunning, ostracism, and at times violence. While compliance to norms brings with it tangible and intangible rewards such as increased esteem, trust and, most importantly, cooperation, non compliance brings with it a disparaging glance or expression of disapproval or disgust, often as a prelude to shunning, ostracism etc. Norms typically have strong roots in the soil of small groups and communities. The feeling of guilt or shame may make the external enforcement of internalised norms unnecessary. In this unit 1, we will be defining the norms in general, the social norms and give a description of the different types of norms etc. Emphasis will be laid on the need for such norms and the typical characteristics of the norms.

Some social norms are universal (e.g., the prohibition of incest), while others are more localised. Social norms, as such, are neither good nor bad, but rather become benefit or burden in so far as they facilitate or constrain behaviour guided by moral values, practical reasons or instrumental ends. The behaviour guided by these norms may be strongly reinforced by self-interest. Furthermore, universalistic norms without dyadic sanctions or enforcement are often comparatively weak, as would be a norm of trustworthiness in a large society.

The operation of social norms often takes place, when a subcultural group, such as a gang, draws attention to itself through its regular and flagrant violation of popular or culturally predominant norms. While the internalisation of social norms may take place below the surface of consciousness, it is worth noting that at times social norms can get internalised to the extent that they do not need social enforcement. In fact they are adhered to by individuals of their own accord.

Social norms are in fact omnipresent and they resemble tradition and customs which are generally not violated. Violation brings severe sanctions of which the social ostracisation makes people think twice before they break the norm.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

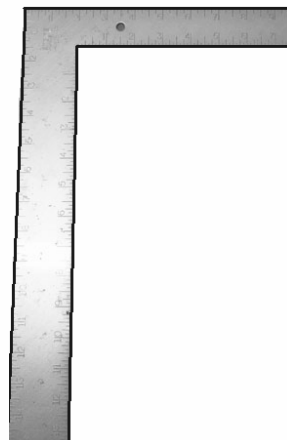
By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define social norms;
- enlist various types of social norms;
- elucidate the needs and importance of social norms;
- explain the characteristic features of social norms; and
- describe the influence of norms on individual's behaviour.

1.2 NORMS

It is a mutually agreed fact that our behaviour is guided by the *norms* of the society we live in and we like to do the things which we think and believe that other people will approve of. Similarly, we try to avoid those behaviours which we think and believe that other people will disapprove of. That's why, everybody smiles while wishing somebody happy birth day and nobody laughs during somebody's funeral. We use social norms that is the socially established behaviours, as information about what behaviour is appropriate in a given situation. Let's have a closer look at the word *norm* before entering this interesting field.

The word *norm* comes from the Latin word 'norma' which means a *carpenter's square* (see picture below), a pattern or a rule. You might have seen a carpenter's toolkit having



this tool. Stopping for a while, have you ever seen him using it? Can you just describe how and why he uses this tool? This tool is used as a guide to create

true, standard lines for cutting the lumber. Thus, norma is used by the carpenter to know how to “go on”, and if he systematically *follows the guidance*, it results in a well made, beautiful structure. And, the credit for this goes to the carpenter and not to the norma or square as such. Isn't it? OK, let's now move on to the meaning of norms in psychological terms in social context.

1.2.1 Meaning of Norms

Here we shall look into various definitions of norms and shall try to know the norms we are going to study in this unit.

Sherif (1936) explained norms as the jointly negotiated rules for social behaviour, the “customs, traditions, standards, rules, values, fashions, and all other criteria of conduct which are standardised as a consequence of the contact of individuals” (p. 03).

Granovetter (2004) defines norms in simple terms as the “shared ideas about the proper way to behave”.

Postmes, Spears and Cihangir (2001) defined group norm as “a standard or a rule that is accepted by members of the group as applying to themselves and other group members, prescribing appropriate thought and behaviour within the group”.

According to Critto (1999), “social norms are shared ways of thinking, feeling, desiring, deciding and acting which are observable in regularly repeated behaviours and are adopted because they are assumed to solve problems”.

It is also worth sharing a widely accepted definition of social norms: “socially shared definitions of the way people *do* behave or *should* behave” (emphasis added, see Paluck, 2009, p. 596).

On the basis of the above definitions of norms, group norms and social norms, what do you conclude? We may say that, having a unique characteristic of being *shared*, norms are attitudes and behaviours of people which we expect them to show uniformly when they are in their group and/or society and these norms are learned, established and utilised when a person comes in contact with others. Let us take a few situation examples which can make these definitions more explicit. An exercise is given in the box. Try it before proceeding further.

A small exercise. Let's live the following situations for a short while. First, tell us about the dress and possible behaviour of Mr. A in three different situations when: (a) he has to go to park for morning walk; (b) he has to go to celebrate the birth day party of a colleague's kid; and (c) he has to attend a funeral. Write at least one paragraph on each of these three situations mainly describing what *types of dress* would Mr. A wear in these three situations and what *type of behaviour* he might exhibit in these situations.

Second, Ms. B is coming to the regional center to attend her psychology counseling session. On the road, she hears the siren of an ambulance van coming near from behind. What would she do after listening to that siren?

Imagine the situation, take your time and write a few lines describing your probable response. Well, now, go through your descriptions of these four

situations in which Mr. A and Ms. B found themselves. Do you see something unique to each of these situations? Do one more thing here.

Ask some of your other co-learners to take these exercises as above and now, compare your descriptions with theirs. Do they also think on the grounds similar to you? Are there any similarities in the response pattern of all of you? If yes, what are these and why did these similarities, if any, appear in your descriptions under the circumstances that the above exercise was not your planned test, you were not given any fixed syllabus or study material few days back to understand such social situations which we may face and face in our lives, and you were not prepared at all to take this quiz today. Despite this, you all might be confident about the correctness of your descriptions of the above situations.

You might have described the above example situations as follows: Mr. A would go the park in the morning in casual wear and would do some jogging and light exercises to remain fit; he would go to the colleague's house in formal wear congratulating the parents and giving good wishes to the kid with some attractive gift to celebrate his birth day and share happiness; and, in somebody's funeral, he would go in rather plain, simple and white cloths and would empathetically condole the aggrieved family members and relatives of the deceased; and Ms. B would leave the way taking her extreme left to let the ambulance van go first, keeping in mind that it might be carrying somebody in emergent conditions for seeking immediate medical care and attention for saving his/her life. What you and others had imagined and described for Mr. A and Ms. B covered certain behaviours which are considered "proper" under given situations in our society and are known as *social norms*. We shall study about these social norms in this unit.

1.2.2 Types of Norms

In the above few paragraphs of the previous section, we have just read up a few important definitions of norms and realised that these are something highly crucial and integral part of our life which influence almost each and every domain of our behaviour as the backbone of our social life. You might be wondering here that how many types of norms are there. Let's us have a look at some of the major types of norms.

1) *Group norms vs. social norms*

Group norms may be situationally and locally defined, and hence may be quite independent and distinct from social norms that exist at the levels of communities and societies (see Postmes, Spears and Cihangir, 2001).

2) *Explicit vs. implicit norms*

This is a very important distinction between two types of norms. Many times, we have clear, detailed and explicitly stated rules of behaviour and usually cover the written constitutions and laws. A general example is "No parking" or "No Horn" designated areas, and while traveling in public transport, it is explicitly prohibited to carry weapons, explosives or the things which may be dangerous to the health and life of others.

On the other hand, we also have norms which are unspoken or implicit which usually develop in informal manner. Why do we usually go the parties or social meetings late? Because we apply our past experiences to the specific situations and think (rather, know) that it would not start in time and others would also have not yet arrived. Similarly, how many of us leave the hotel/restaurants without giving a tip for the waiter who served us?

3) *Injunctive norms vs. descriptive norms*

When we are concerned about what others think we *should do* or *should not do* in a given situation in order to either get others' approval or to avoid their disapproval, it is regarded as *injunctive norms* or also as *subjective norms*.

Injunctive norms are based on one's perception of what others believe to be appropriate behaviour. Taking cognisance of few contemporary researches, Deutsch and Gerard (1955) remarked that individual psychological processes are subject to social influences. They described two different types of social influences, viz., (i) Normative social influence (ii) Informational social influence.

Normative social influence refers to an influence to conform with the positive expectations of others and is based on our fundamental need to be accepted by others, making us follow injunctive norms.

On the other hand, informational social influence is one in which we accept information obtained from another as *evidence* about the reality., These are *descriptive norms* which are concerned with individuals' perceptions and beliefs about the prevalence of others' behaviour or about what others *do* in a specific situation. (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955).

4) *Consensus norms vs. critical norms*

Postmes, Spears and Cihangir (2001), made a distinction between consensus norms and critical norms while studying the impact of group norms on the quality of decisions taken by them.

In consensus norms, they ascribed devotion of groups to initial decisions and the inclination to ignore disconfirming evidence in order to strongly tilt toward reaching a consensus.

On the other hand, critical norm group members, adopting critical thought, invested their energy in the critical examination of decision alternatives before reaching a consensus.

The researchers found that the groups with a consensus norm made poorer decisions than the groups with critical norms. Critical norms improved the quality of decisions, whereas consensus norms did not. This revealed the importance of critical thinking and independence in certain group situations.

5) *Reciprocity norms vs. social-responsibility norms*

Myers (1990) discussed about the above two types of norms: The *reciprocity* norm, as the name suggests, guides us to return help to those who have helped us at the appropriate time, that is when they also need help.

And, the social-responsibility norm makes us help the needy, who deserve help even if they have never helped us when we were in need of some type of help.

6) *Situational norms*

Norms are also situation dependent and are known as situational norms. For example, when you in a library, you either remain silent or do not speak in loud voice. Instead, you whisper. Similarly, whenever a Hindu devotee goes to temple, he/she removes the shoes to enter the temple. He/she takes care that temple is a sacred place and does everything, expected of him/her, to maintain its sanctity.

Thus as is seen above, there are various types of norms. Law is always in written format. Norms need not always be in written form. There are also verbal norms which are nowhere written and we learn as well as teach them during the course of interaction and in the process of socialisation. For example, it is a written norm you usually find pasted at the railway stations and in the trains warning people and forbidding them from taking eatable from strangers because earlier some innocent passengers have been drugged and looted. It is usually in verbal form that we teach the norm to our children not to talk to strangers on road or in park or else they may get kidnapped. Regardless of the type of norm, we all respect, follow and obey them.

1.2.3 Violation of Social Norms

*“The right of life of women in Pakistan is conditional on their obeying **social norms and traditions.**”* - Hina Jilani, an advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and human rights activist (emphasis added).

While shame and guilt are minor forms of punishment for norm violation, there can be more serious punishment such as murder also if one deviates from and violates the social norms. Take for instance, the honour killings. Honour killing, in general terms, refers to the brutal murder/killing of the youngsters who marry against their prevailing caste norms. A broad meaning to honour killings, which are not just observed in India alone, was given by Human Rights Watch (2001), *“Honour crimes are acts of violence, usually murder, committed by male family members against female family members, who are held to have brought dishonour upon the family”*.

A woman, victim of honour killing, may be targeted by her family members if she refuses to enter into an arranged marriage with the person of their choice. They may kill her if she had been raped or had become a victim of sexual assault, etc. In certain cases women who proceed to seek divorce on the grounds of spouse abuse or if she had allegedly committed adultery, the woman can be killed which is the most severe form of punishment.

During June 2010, the Supreme Court of India issued notices and sought responses from the Central Government and states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh where the instances of honour killing appeared in one form or the other. A vacation bench of Justices R M Lodha and A K Patnaik issued notices to the Union of India and the ministries of Home Affairs and Women and Child Development. The chief secretaries of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar have been directed to likewise respond after they were allegedly found to show a high propensity to honour crimes.

Even in Delhi, the capital of the country, two such cases were reported during those times. Taking a lead in the matter, an NGO ‘Shakti Vahini’ had filed a PIL

in the Supreme Court against the killings of couples *for honour* who fell in love and got married violating their social norms (The Times of India, June 22, 2010). Although the criminals and killers are punished by the Law of the land, yet it is too late if two innocent lives are lost. It is worth mentioning here what considered was a landmark judgement for such honour killings, a court in Karnal district of Haryana in March 2010 awarded the death sentence to five persons and life imprisonment to one for murdering Manoj and Babli, members of the same clan, who had eloped from their village and got married in Chandigarh in April 2007. The couple was later abducted and murdered. Their bodies were found in a canal in June 2007 (Hindustan Times, March 30, 2010).

Here, we need to stop for a while and think: what is wrong here? Do we have a wrong social norm, are we interpreting it wrongly or are we applying it wrongly? And, most importantly, do we need to change this norm? If yes, how?

1.3 NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL NORMS

The social norms perform important functions and serve our specific purposes, even our being unaware of these most of the time, which highlight their need and importance in our daily life. Various experimental studies have revealed that social norms can influence and determine one's perception, evaluation and behaviour (e.g., Sherif, 1936 and Asch, 1955) about which we shall study in detail in the third and fourth units. In one study, the research found that despite being rated by participants as less motivating, descriptive norms were stronger predictors of activity behaviour and healthy eating intentions than other well established non normative reasons (Priebe, 2009).

Critto (1999) remarked that social norms function as shared ways of thought and action due to which we may expect some predictable courses of action when we observe them appropriately in a given specific situation. So, we may guess what others might do under certain social circumstances and accordingly we may choose our course of action also.

Importance of norms

Norms especially group norms are important because, besides controlling the group behaviour, they also control the behaviour of its members, and provide stability and a socially desired orderliness to the groups. In the absence of norms, the behaviour of group members will become chaotic and the group and its members will not be able to survive for long. Norms are also important for as they facilitate and foster interaction between and among the group members.

It is because of these social norms that we see the predictable similarities in the behaviour of group members. At the same time, it is these group norms which make the groups different from each other because they follow different norms and traditions. The effect of these norms on one's behaviour is not necessarily dependent on his/her being in the group. Rather, these norms affect the behaviour even when he/she is not a part of a group and remains alone. Thus, the norms regulate the social behaviour. If one's behaviour is in conformity with the group norms, he/she may get the acceptance and praise. On the contrary, if there is non-conformation or breaking of social norms, the non-conformist or violator person may have to face criticism or be subjected to punishment as decided by the particular group.

Another important function performed by the norms, which makes them important for us, is that they provide us solutions to common problems by offering available possible alternatives. Also, norms promote mutual respect and service for others which ultimately give rise to harmony in the social relations and a sense of social well-being. So, norms perform an important function of linking people to people, people to the society and society to society.

Norms, in addition to the above also help us fulfill one of our basic psychological need, viz., to belong to others. Being social beings, humans need to be associated with others, they require love, self-esteem and belongingness. Following norms, all these needs of the individuals will be satisfied. This otherwise is neither possible nor persistent.

Thus, norms play a very important and fulfilling role in human lives. However the norms are to be framed by the society in order the its members have a better life the society also advances in a positive direction. The society by formulating the norms encourages its members to follow the norms for their own benefit and the benefit of the society in which they live..

Self Assessment Questions

1) Define social norms with examples specific to your socio-cultural set-up.

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2) Why do you think it is necessary to follow social norms?

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3) Describe various types of norms.

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4) Enlist the dangers of violating social norms.

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1.4 CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF SOCIAL NORMS

By now, it is clear that behaviour of humans is guided by the prevailing social norms which interact with human environment and societal factors and affect the social well being of people in the society. These norms have certain features unique to them which are as follows:

1) *Serve as guiding principle*

The norms, (as the norma guides and help a carpenter) show the group members ways to behave in a socially appropriate manner which all the other members approve of. Coming back to the examples of Mr. A and Ms. B, your responses exactly reflect the prevailing norms specific to the given social situations like attending somebody's birth day party or funeral.

2) *Develop as a result of interaction and communication*

Norms are formed as a result of human interactions and communication in the society. Hence, due to the vast size of a society and interaction as well as communication being a complex process, norms are not formed so easily and quickly. Once formed, they are not susceptible to change in any short or long time unless there is a dire need to change the norms in the interest of the society and the individuals who live in it.

3) *Culture – specificity*

That the norms are culture specific seems to be obvious by the occurrence of the same phenomenon at two places differently. Take for instance child marriage. The Hindu (August 04, 2010) reported that the State Minister for Social Welfare Damodar Rawat saying, “Bihar is one of the hotspots for child marriages in the country and on an average marriages of 67 percent girls are below the age of 18 years.

Earlier this very year (February 20, 2010), The Hindu had published a study prepared by the Population Council of India and was released by Union Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, which was conducted in six states of India including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu and surveyed over 58,000 youths in the age group of 15 – 29 years. The main findings, as published by The Hindu showed that one-fifth of the young women surveyed were married off before the age of 15, half before they turned 18 and two-thirds before the age of 20. In this context, Zaman (2008), while presenting an appraisal to the marriage system of the Karbis of Assam, pointed out that Child marriage is an unknown system among the Karbis. Thus it appears that the culture decides the norms in a society and thus norms are culture specific.

While the above research on the topic of child marriage was across cultures, let us see if within the same culture such differences in the norms exist. Take for instance widow remarriage. A Hindu widow is expected to live a life of prayers and noble endeavors by the society she lives in. The expectation does not extend to Hindu widowers. Interestingly, a man who loses his wife is usually pressurised to marry for the sake of ‘companionship’ and so on. The obvious gender discrimination begins from within the society and percolates to the people who

are a part of it. *Those who question it are disapproved of or alienated tacitly and those who abide by these social norms are labeled as respectable”* .

4) *Keep control over violators*

Social norms help keep control over the behaviour in direct as well as indirect fashion. Each society has its own measures to ‘punish’ the violators (direct control) who deviate from the established social norms and people also ‘feel shame and guilt’ when they violate those norms (indirect control). Be Can you imagine the consequent embarrassment you might face if you go to attend somebody’s birthday party ‘without gift’ or what will your reaction when you find a person laughing during somebody’s funeral?

5) *Social norms are dynamic*

Social norms are an integral part of social systems like gender disparities. If the society and groups strive for changing the social norms, such existing inequalities would be greatly reduced to improve the human well being and raise the quality of life of all. This dynamic nature of norms has witnessed many major normative changes in Indian history as for example the *Sati-pratha* in which a widow used to willingly burn herself with her deceased husband on his funeral pyre.

Similarly, Falomir-Pichastor, Munoz-Rojas, Invernizze and Mugny (2004) noted that strengthening norms against discrimination can lead to lessening of prejudice and discrimination which have been traditionally explained by the influence of social norms. This in turn would help to improve the integration of immigrants into the larger society. Norms are generally considered as injunctive and indicative of what is socially approved or disapproved, and they are often related to social influence processes. Similarly, Zitek and Hebl (2007), focusing on the role of social psychology in studying the attempts to reduce or eradicate people’s prejudices, noted that prejudices may be altered through social influence.

6) *Norms teach two way cooperation*

There are studies which indicate the existence of a norm of conditional cooperation in social settings. For example, if other group members cooperate with us in any endeavour, the norms also require us to cooperate in return (Fehr and Fischbacher, 2004). Thus, norms teach us to be cooperative with other helpers.

7) *Norm is not a single entity*

Norms also encompass prevailing traditions, folkways, mores, fashion, religion, and laws which are dominant and in use in the society. Laws are a binding force on the people to accept and follow the legal requirement, and fashion also is an exception but other types/forms of norms are more or less conservative in nature and require mammoth efforts for change.

1.5 LET US SUM UP

Let us sum up this unit with a question. As per Corruption Perceptions’ Index released by Transparency International on October 26, 2010, India has got 87th rank out of 178 countries in its perceived levels of corruption for the year 2010. Whereas India got 84th rank out of 180 countries last year. See the table given below.

| Year | Rank | Out of Countries | Rank indicates |
|------|------|------------------|---|
| 2010 | 87 | 178 | Countries with low rankings are perceived as less corrupt and countries with higher rankings are perceived as more corrupt. |
| 2009 | 84 | 180 | |

(Source: <http://www.transparency.org/>, data downloaded on Oct. 26, 2010).

This means that there is an increase in corruption (or in the *perception of corruption*) since last year in India. Do you remember that in Section 1.3, we read that social norms can influence and determine one's *perception*, evaluation and behaviour? Is the *perception* of corruption in India, as reflected in Corruption Perceptions' Index, a result of any specific norm? Can we relate the problem of corruption to *norms* as well? Has corruption obtained the status of a socially approved norm for getting the work done which otherwise would be difficult or impossible to accomplish without giving or taking bribe? Think in psychological terms.

As a student of social psychology and social behaviour, in this unit you have studied social norms which you now know that are integral part of our social life and whether or not we know about it *per se*, and whether or not we like it in its present form, these affect us and too much of our behaviour. Applying our knowledge of social norms for the betterment of human social life requires a lot of factual analysing, personal understanding, and social convincing. In the following units, you will further progress towards it by studying conformity.

1.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Describe the role of social norms in maintaining harmony in the society.
- 2) Give five examples each of the behaviours which your society do approve and do not approve in your own specific socio – cultural set – up.
- 3) How do social psychologists utilise their knowledge and understanding of social norms to reduce/remove prejudice against any special target group e.g., ex-convicts?
- 4) Can you imagine “a society without norms” and write a critical essay on it?

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UNIT 2 NORM FORMATION, FACTORS INFLUENCING NORMS, ENFORCEMENT OF NORMS, NORM FORMATION AND SOCIAL CONFORMITY

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Norm Formation
- 2.3 Factors Influencing Norm Formation
 - 2.3.1 Social Learning
 - 2.3.2 Cost of Individual Learning
 - 2.3.3 Adoption by Group Members
 - 2.3.4 Cooperative Group Behaviour
- 2.4 Enforcement of Norms
- 2.5 Social Conformity
 - 2.5.1 Factors Affecting Conformity
 - 2.5.2 Factors for Conformity
 - 2.5.3 Factors of Non Conformity
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Unit End Questions
- 2.8 Suggested Readings and References

2.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the minimum features in the rise and functioning of small groups is a set of standardised norms which regulate the relations and activities within the group and with non-members and out-groups . (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood and Sherif, 1961).

All human beings have various types of needs which demand fulfillment. You might recall here that in the second unit (Theories of human development) of first block of your BPC – 002 course, you have read about Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. And, on the basis of your experiences, you might have perceived that there is an established *order* in the society for the fulfillment of these needs which helps in maintaining harmony and peace in the society. If you have to buy something from a shop, there is a particular set behaviour. You provide your list to the shop keeper. He gives you the desired things. You pay for it. You do not take the things without making the payments. If you have to travel by train, there also is a set order. You go to the ticket window, stand in queue till your turn comes, buy a train ticket and board the train again respecting other passengers’ comfort. There also you are expected to follow some norms.

If you are taking the things forcibly from the shop, without making the due payments and if you are breaking the queue at the ticket window at railway

station, you are violating certain norms and are creating chaos which other members of the society definitely do not like and do not permit you to act as per your own free will and against the established order or norms. You may have to face the music as per the nature and gravity of your act. Thus, you can well imagine the role these norms play in maintaining the discipline in and the stability of the society.

This feature of having a set of standardised norms is applicable on society at large in specific instances besides small groups as Sherif and others said. In the previous unit, we have studied in detail the meaning of norms, why the social norms are required and what are the main features of norms. In this unit, we are further going to study the formation of norms, various factors that affect norms, the enforcement of norms and social conformity.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

On completing this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the formation of social norms;
- enlist factors influencing social norms;
- explain the ways the norms are enforced in society; and
- elucidate peoples' conforming behaviour to their social norms.

2.2 NORM FORMATION

If you have to play a game with your small group of three or four friends, it is quite simple and an easy task to form your own rules of the game and implement them. It is also an easy task to monitor that each group member follows these rules and norms. While prescribing the frame of reference, rewards and punishments are also defined at the same time for the violators of norms. But, when it comes to a larger context such as the society, the formation of new norms does not remain such a comparatively simple or easy task. This is because people in the society belong to various backgrounds, have their set patterns of thinking and beliefs and, most important, have a critical mind. It might not be so easy to convince them over the given matter.

That's why, the social norms are formed slowly and accepted gradually, which is also based on the experiences of the people concerned or affected. Some of the factors that influence norm formation are presented in the succeeding paragraphs.

Experience with peers, parents and authorities: Swiss psychologist Piaget (1932) conducted important experiments on children to study the development of the sense of morality and the concept of justice in them. He observed children playing with marbles and found that learning of the social standards of right and wrong, conscience and the concept of justice progressed gradually in children, largely as a result of their *experiences* with their peers, parents and other authorities.

Social interaction also plays an important role in the formation of norms. The social comparison theory of Festinger (1954) posits that interpersonal interactions and agreement among group members are fundamental to the formation of group norms. A famous experiment to study the development of norms in laboratory was conducted by Sherif using autokinetic effect. In a totally dark room, a point

of stationary light is presented and the subjects perceive motion in it. When they are asked to judge the distance the light traveled, they guess for themselves first when alone. But when they are in a group, they look at others for information and follow the norms set by the group.

You might have by now observed that the norms are learned in a social set up. Because we have grown up in a particular society, we also imbibe the norms prevailing in that particular society. The norms give an indication of cultural differences on certain normative behaviours as well. For instance a Chinese child might be following different norms other than a Japanese child. In a given nation itself where there are cultural diversity like India, there may be certain norms followed by people of northern parts which differ from the norms followed by people of southern states.

Observational learning: Even in a given culture itself, the norms followed by groups are learned and followed by other group members of the same culture. Hogg and Reid (2006) have remarked that “People in groups use other members’ behaviour as information to construct a group norm”. It also gives an impression of *observational learning*. What we see around us, we learn (e.g., Bandura, 1997).

Communication is another important factor in the formation of social norms. It is not necessary always that the norms should be in written form for others to study and follow. A lot many norms are verbal in nature and travel across generations.

Utility of the norms: One highly crucial determinant of the formation of social norms is its relative *utility* for the members of the group. The norm under development, in its true sense, must lead to the betterment of the social life, enhancement of social well being, and fulfillment of needs (general and/or specific) of its members. Only those norms that are valued and reinforced by the group or society, and that which lead to the fulfillment of group goals, will be formed successfully and followed strictly by the people.

2.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING NORM FORMATION

We are now well aware that much of our day to day behaviours is guided by what we believe others will approve or disapprove. We do many things and do not do many other things because we evaluate and judge those behaviours on the social scale of acceptance - rejection and the correspondingly associated rewards and punishments. On the basis of the discussions so far, we might be able to enlist many factors that influence the norm formation.

2.3.1 Social Learning

Social learning plays a very significant role in the formation and administration of social norms. Whatever norms are prevailing in a given society at a given time are learnt by people and are followed in the given shape or sense. Once upon a time, *sati-pratha* was in practice in India. So, people used to follow it and behave accordingly. Now, it has no place in the present day Indian culture and societies, so people neither expect any widow burn herself on her husband’s funeral pyre nor punish any widow for not following this (abandoned) *pratha*. Rather, towards a positive end, the social norms are witnessing reforms for their re marriage.

2.3.2 Cost of Individual Learning

It is a well established fact that human social life advances and becomes better due to learning. However the question is whether individuals learn each and everything, new or old, by themselves. No, certainly not. Whatsoever, our elders have learnt by their actions and experiences, they teach us. So, we do not have to learn those things putting in fresh efforts. Following the established norms reduces the cost of individual learning and brings efficiency by reducing errors.

2.3.3 Adoption by Group Members

You might have also noticed by your own experiences or the media news that to be a member of a group, you are supposed to adopt the rules, regulations and norms of that group and/or society. If somebody does not adopt the norms, the community might punish the offenders in a predetermined way. To kill in the name of honour, or *honour killing*, which we read earlier, is the extreme form of punishment given to those young boys or girls or both who, the community perceives, did not adopt and also violated the prevailing group norms related to the institution of marriage.

2.3.4 Cooperative Group Behaviour

Humans, being social animal, tend to form groups and to achieve personal or group goals, cooperate with each other. Depending upon the particular situation, sometimes, this cooperative behaviour itself may take the form of a rule or a norm. Each group member shows here such cooperation and group belongingness, that the group becomes high cohesive and the members of the group maintain a good coordination with other group members in various endeavours of the group.

Those who either do not cooperate or cheat, are subjected to punishment as decided by the group or as per the group norms. Some examples of punishment may include for instance, termination of membership or being temporarily or even permanently expelled from that group etc. Such practice of expulsion is still prominently popular in traditional village communities in which the village Panchayats socially boycott those who violate the norm by pronouncing punishment for them as '*hookah – pani band*' (Smoking in group with a pipe and drinking water from a common pot not allowed). In this punishment of temporary exclusion, the offenders are barred from sharing social life and available facilities with other equals in the village or society. So, to be considered as part of the in-group and to maintain the group membership, one has to follow the group norms.

In order to further clearly understand the factors influencing norms, we may have a close look at what Birenbaum and Sagarin (1976) defined as norms. They said that norms are legitimate, socially shared standards against which the appropriateness of behaviour can be evaluated. For this

- i) The norms must be genuine, justifiable and valid for the given group or society, leading to a lawful order to bring harmony and stability to the group or society.
- ii) Secondly, these standards are to be shared by the members of the society. This is the most basic characteristic of norms and highlighted by most of the authors in their writings on this topic.

iii) The third characteristic is again very important that once a standard is set and shared, the behaviour of all is evaluated in light of those norms.

Those groups do not face any conflict where the behaviour of the group members is found in conformity and run smoothly towards the achievement of their set targets. These groups make progress and their members too. However, where the behaviour of the group members is not in conformity with the group norms, their progress and achievement of goals are hampered, negatively affecting their social well being. They have to find out the reasons for the conflicts and non conformity and to take remedial measures which may range from appropriately punishing the offenders to suitably changing the norms.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Describe the main factors responsible for the formation of norms.

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2) Explain the relationship between social learning and social norms.

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3) Enlist the factors influencing social norms.

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4) What is the importance of cooperative social behaviour?

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2.4 ENFORCEMENT OF NORMS

It would not be an exaggeration to say that human social life is not possible without social norms. This is the unique characteristic of the humans to form and enforce such normative standards of behaviours. Actually, the very existence of norms is inseparable from their enforcement. Now the issue is that once formed how these norms are enforced. It is well known that the social norms are shared by people. Some norms are shared by all the members of the society and some norms, being group specific, are shared by only the particular group members. This is called the *social* nature of the norms. Also, because these are social, they are enforced by other people through appropriate rewards and punishments.

Here, we can see that norms carry some emotional values also because the violation of norms brings negative emotions of shame and guilt to the violators. To avoid these negative emotions, people follow these enforced norms as they understand that if they violate any norm they may be punished by the group or the society they live in. This is perhaps the emotional value of the norms that people follow the group members and norms, even sometimes against their own perceptions and judgements, so as to avoid shame and guilt associated with the tag of non-conformist.

Another important aspect is that social norms are also defined as informal rules of behaviour which are followed by people for some reason other than the fear of legal sanctions (see Herfeld, 2008). Hence, these social norms are not enforced by any formal agency just like legal norms. Rather, they are enforced by the society through social pressures and forces like *hookah – pani band* system of the panchayats earlier.

As the norms are shared by the group members, it also depends upon the society as to what it considers as right and wrong, what the society approves or disapproves. These are in turn function as shared value and plays significant role in the enforcement of social norms in a given society. It is evident that norms cannot be enforced unless shared and accepted by the members of a group or the society.

It is also true that sometimes individual goals are in line with group goals and sometimes they are not. In the former conditions (the individual goals being in line with group goals), the individuals will voluntarily follow the group norms. But in the latter (the individual goals being different from group goals), there are chances of norm violation by the individual member(s). In such cases, the groups have to adopt appropriate mechanisms to save the sanctity of their norms from damage and violation. Also it depends upon the relative cost of the goal or norm. If the importance of the goal is more and cost of the given norm is higher then there are also the chances of the break down of the norm in favour of the goal.

Since human beings are intelligent and have critical minds, it becomes obligatory for the group also, in the case of norm violations, to exhibit their unbiased, non-selfish punishment mechanism against the offenders. If they are perceived as biased or enforcing any norm in a selfish manner, they might lose their authority or power, given to them by the group, to enforce the norms. Their motivation to enforce the norms must be seen as pious by others.

However, it is also evident that once a norm is formed and established, it does not require the people to pressurise others to follow these norms. The members of the group or society internalise these norms in due course and follow them even when others are not present there. Let us take a simple example of the rule of the road for driving on the left side in India. Even when there is no traffic controller, we drive on the left because the society has internalised this norm and now we need nobody to pressurise us to keep to the left on the road.

Here, we should also understand that if there is no punishment associated with violation of norms, it would be nearly impossible to enforce them for regulating social behaviour. The process of the formation of norm itself implies the enforcement of norms in group or society through suitable rewards to the followers and punishment in suitable form to the offenders. This is made clear by Fehr and Gächter (2000) in their definition of norms. According to them, a social norm is a behavioural regularity that is based on a socially shared belief of how one ought to behave. This triggers the *enforcement* of the prescribed behaviour by informal social sanctions. Further, we simply cannot transfer the responsibility of enforcing the social norms onto others or any other external agency. Rather, it is the shared responsibility and task of each one of us, that is each member of the group and society.

2.5 SOCIAL CONFORMITY

Go carefully through the below given two paragraphs and find out what is the similarity therein:

When I came to this country at the age of eight, one of the first things my parents taught me in order that I might fit in to my new environment was that “when in Rome, you do as the Romans.” This is something I have adhered to all my life and to a great degree allowed me to flourish here and operate effectively in many different cultures during my career. - Joe Navarro (2010).

While the accommodation was comfortable, cleaning standards were below what she was used to but she agreed with the adage, when in Rome do as the Romans do. - Michele Nugent (2010, accommodation here refers to the Commonwealth Games Village built for national/international athletes and team officials and she here is Pam McKenzie, Australian shooter and a silver medal winner in the 10m women’s air pistol pairs event at the Delhi 2010 Commonwealth Games).

Yes, you are right. Both have a common proverb: *When in Rome do as Romans do*. Secondly, can you highlight a significant meaning this proverb carries either in the above specific examples or in general?

It gives us an impression that an early conformation to the prevailing circumstances helps us in early adjustment which further helps us concentrate on our main goal. Think of Pam. Sticking to the cleaning standards which she was used to, if she would have been continuously complaining about the cleanliness of the games village, could she focus on bull’s eyes and win silver?

Similarly, this very *mantra*, helped Navarro to fit to his new environment, flourish there and perform effectively in many different cultures during his career. This conformity, in psychological terms, refers to “a change in behaviour or belief ... as a result of real or imagined group pressure” (Kiesler and Kiesler, 1969).

A world famous study on conformity was conducted by Solomon Asch in which, unlike Sherif's ambiguous stimulus where the light stimulus was not clear to the subjects (you have read about Sherif's study in Section 2.2 of this unit), he used unambiguous stimuli consisting one card having a standard line on it and a second card having three comparison lines on it. The subjects were asked to compare the standard line with the comparison lines and to tell the number of the comparison which best matched the length of the standard line. The task and stimuli were clear and the subjects had to tell what they were perceiving in this perceptual judgement task. When the subjects were alone, there were no errors in their perceptual judgments.

Then, Asch introduced group conditions in which, along with a subject (critical subjects), a group of few more subjects (actually confederates or associates of the experimenter) was also there giving their responses on the same task. But, these confederates were actually pre-instructed to give *wrong* judgments on some pre-selected trials. Asch was surprised to find the influence of the group on the critical subjects' judgments when they were also seen giving *wrong* judgements in tune with that of the confederates because they wanted to give the response which had the group's approval.

2.5.1 Factors Affecting Conformity

As you have just seen in Asch's study above that the group pressure leads one towards conformity, but as you shall see in the next unit not all subjects conform to the group. Why is this so? Some factors seem to affect the conformity behaviour. These factors are given below:

Cohesiveness is one such factor which many researchers have found to influence conformity to a great extent. According to Baron, Byrne and Branscombe (2006), "Cohesiveness refers to all of the factors that bind group members together into a coherent social entity". When the relative importance of a group is high, we tend to conform more than when the cohesiveness is low. The group which we admire and to which we feel a sense of belongingness, we also feel like following them. On the other hand, if any group we find low in prestige or social status and we do not like, we do not conform to their manners and methods.

Group size is also one of the main factors that influence our conformity behaviour. In the experiment conducted by Asch he also found that the group up to three members had a great influence on the subjects and more than three had no more influence. But later researchers found that up to eight members and beyond in a group had greater effect on the subjects. So, it gives an impression that the larger the group the more is its effect. Is it the scenario of elections in India? Are we affected by the number of followers of a particular political party or group? Do we feel inclined towards a particular party because more people were with this party?

2.5.2 Factors for Conformity

In the experiment conducted by Sherif, he used ambiguous stimulus (autokinetic effect) and Asch in his experiment used clear and unambiguous line-judgement task. Both studies are attributed to different *social influences*.

In *informational social influence*, we have the desire to be correct and look at others' behaviour as a source of information. In Sherif's study, the subjects had

no actual information about the distance the light traveled. They looked at others' responses and conformed to them in order to be correct. Whereas, in *normative social influence*, we have the desire to be liked and accepted by other group members so we conform to their behaviour.

In Asch's experiments, despite having correct information, the subjects conformed to the *wrong* responses of other group members because they were affected by normative social influence and wanted to be liked or accepted by other group members. By conforming, they were maintaining their place in the good books of others besides avoiding rejection. So, they were *doing* just like *Romans*.

2.5.3 Factors for Non Conformity

Psychology is the study of *individual differences* and psychologists here are also interested in the people who do not conform and do not go along with the group. In each group there are found few members who maintain their individuality and independence, and do not conform to the group norms just in the name of following. They use their senses, judge the situations and think independently.

Asch was equally interested in independence along with conformity and valued independence more. Some people also do not conform and resist social pressure many times as they wish to have control over their lives and do not let others lead their lives. They give more value to their personal control and personal freedom and do not yield to the social pressure easily. Besides these few persons who do not conform at will are also few persons who cannot conform due to their psychological, physical or legal reasons.

We may conclude here by mentioning that besides certain social situations (like some ambiguous or uncertain situations), certain psychological characteristics of the individual like confidence level, inferiority complex, attitudes, intelligence levels, etc. also affect the conformity behaviour. Although independence and critical appraisal of the norms and social situations is a must for the development of society, yet the importance of conformity is almost paramount.

2.6 LET US SUM UP

We all, up to some extent, yield to the social pressures in our daily routine life. What we wear, what we eat, which car we prefer, and on and so forth, indicate that most of our behaviours, whether we know or not, whether we agree or not, are influenced by others and social norms. The study of social norms is essential because of their inherent benefits like regulating social behaviours and satisfying individual needs. Studying the formation and development of social norms can give new insights to the society. That's why, social psychologists have been studying social influence, norms and conformity since long. After reading about the norms and conformity in detail in the first two units of this block now, we shall move on to the next unit wherein we will study two specific experimental studies conducted by Sherif and Asch.

2.7 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Explain the effect of social norms on an individual's behaviour with examples.

- 2) How are the norms enforced in a given social setting?
- 3) Is the compulsory enforcement of norms beneficial for the society?
- 4) Critically explain the quotation of Warner.
- 5) Conformity has certain advantages. Write a note on its disadvantages.

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**Norm Formation, Factors
Influencing Norms,
Enforcement of Norms,
Norm Formation and Social
Conformity**

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UNIT 3 AUTOKINETIC EXPERIMENT IN NORM FORMATION

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Muzafer Sherif – The Pioneer Social Psychologist
- 3.3 Autokinetic Experiment in Norm Formation
 - 3.3.1 Autokinetic Effect
 - 3.3.2 Sherif’s Experiment
 - 3.3.3 Salient Features of Sherif’s Autokinetic Experiments
 - 3.3.4 Critical Appraisal
- 3.4 Related Latest Research on Norm Formation
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Unit End Questions
- 3.7 Suggested Readings and References

3.0 INTRODUCTION

“Social psychologists like to trace the origins of their subdiscipline to texts of that name published by William McDougall (1908) in psychology and E. A. Ross (1908) in sociology. But a psychological social psychology in continuity with the field we know today emerged only in the 1930s and 1940s with figures such as Otto Klineberg, Muzafer Sherif, Gardner Murphy, and Kurt Lewin” – Smith (2005, page 334, emphasis added).

After having elucidated the meaning and characteristics of norms in the first unit of this block and after describing the way the norms are formed in the second unit, we shall now discuss about an interesting experiment on norms’ formation. In this unit, we shall study the autokinetic effect and the ground breaking autokinetic experiment conducted by Muzafer Sherif which has been considered to have played a significant role in the formation of social psychology and contributed substantially to the field of sociology as well.

You might remember that you have studied *social interaction* in the first unit (Introduction to social behaviour – concept, perceiving and behaving, social interaction) of the forth block (Social Behaviour) of your BPC-001 (General Psychology) course. And, you might have also gone through *social influence* in the second unit (Intention, attitudes and interest: Development and Management) of the same block of your BPC-001 course. Whether you have yet realised or not from your own life experiences, one fundamental aspect of group or society is the interaction with others which starts even since birth and has influence on one’s attitudes and behaviour. Whether we like it (or not) and if we have to live in this society (and that we have to), we shall be exposed to interaction with others and it is this interaction through which we see all colours of the society – be it co-operation, competition or conflicts. One more thing we should notice that what we are today has been largely shaped/determined by the society we live in through social interaction and a process called “socialisation”.

Still having some difficulty in visualising the importance of society and social interaction for a person? Then, you need to know about *feral humans* (Lane, 1976) who have grown up *without social interaction*. In 1920, Kamala and Amala, two feral girls of 8 years and 18 months of age respectively, were found in the jungles of Midnapore district, Calcutta, West Bengal and were given to The Reverend Joseph Amrito Lal Singh, rector of the local orphanage. Both girls seemed to be abandoned by their parents and were reported by Father Singh to be raised by wolves. When these girls were “captured,” they were exhibiting all signs of animal behaviour including walking on all four. Amala died one year later on 21 September 1921. Although Father Singh tried to educate Kamala, she could never fully develop language skills, intelligence and other skills required to lead a normal social life. She could develop about 100 words only in her vocabulary but used, for the most part, the nonverbal mode of communication such as bringing dishes whenever she needed food and pulling Mr. Singh’s sleeves for seeking his attention. Four years later, she also died at the age of 12 on 14 November 1929.

In another case, Isabelle was found confined to a small room with her mute mother for the first 6 and a half years of her life. As can be expected, she could also not learn how to speak. Marie Mason, head of the Speech Correction Department at the Columbus State Hospital in Ohio, took the responsibility to educate Isabelle. Fortunate enough than Kamala and Amala, she could successfully rehabilitate as Mason took her to the normal levels of communication in about 20 months of training.

Few doubt the authenticity of and rationality behind the case of Kamala and Amala yet there are some more similar examples a brief account of which, including Isabelle’s, can be seen in Hisama (2000) and to learn more about more than 125 such isolated, confined, wolf and wild children found world-wide, you may visit FeralChildren.com. At the end of the road, however, every such case highlights the crucial role and importance of social influence and social interaction in one’s life even though they suffered the lack of it.

Going carefully through this present unit, you shall see the effects of social influence and social interaction on the formation of social norms studied through autokinetic effect experiment by Muzafer Sherif.

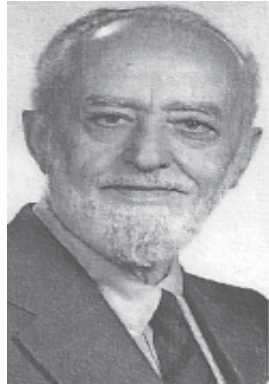
3.1 OBJECTIVES

On completing this unit, you will be able to:

- outline the contribution of Muzafer Sherif;
- describe the concept of autokinetic effect;
- explain autokinetic experiment in norms’ formation;
- elucidate the salient features of Sherif’s experiment; and
- discuss the importance of social informational influences in norms formation.

3.2 MUZAFER SHERIF – THE PIONEER SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGIST

Before proceeding further as per our unit plan and objectives, it seems pertinent to know a bit about the world-famous social psychologist, Muzafer Sherif who is the main focus of this present unit.



Sherif was born on July 29, 1906 in Ödemiş, İzmir Turkey (the Ottoman Empire at that time). He received his B.A. at the İzmir International College in Turkey and earned M.A. at Harvard University. Doing his research work on group norms, he earned his Ph.D. with Gardner Murphy in 1935. Studying the social influence in perception, he wrote his dissertation titled, “Some Social Factors in Perception”, and made an intelligent use of “autokinetic effect” experiments. His ideas and research work laid the basis for his first classic world famous book “The Psychology of Social Norms”. He

married Carolyn Sherif and they were genuinely good company for academic advancement of their field by doing various research projects and writing scholarly books. Father of three daughters, Ann, Sue and Joan, he spent most of his life as Professor at the University of Oklahoma besides enjoying academic positions at Princeton University, Yale University and Pennsylvania State University. He died of a heart attack at the age of 82 on October 16, 1988 in Fairbanks, Alaska, USA.

3.3 AUTOKINETIC EXPERIMENT IN NORM FORMATION

Recapitulation of few related terms is essential here which have direct bearing on various aspects of autokinetic effect experiment.

Conformity: Kiesler and Kiesler (1969) defined conformity as “a change in behaviour or belief ... as a result of real or imagined group pressure”. So, when we go along with the group pressures, it means we are conforming.

Social norms: In general terms, these are rules for behaviour which is acceptable in our particular group/social setting and therefore norms define the accepted, expected and proper behaviour in a social group.

Social influence and norms: Social influence is the pressure exerted on a person or group in order to change his/her attitudes or behaviour. Two types of social influences have been suggested by researchers through which people learn different norms.

Normative social influence: This is based on one’s fundamental need to be accepted by other members of the group; and it is associated with *subjective norms* or *injunctive norms* which mean that we are concerned about what others think we should do or should not do in a given situation or about what behaviour others approve/disapprove or it is the norm of “ought”.

Informational social influence: This refers to people seeing others’ behaviour as a potential source of information to help them define reality and maximise the efficiency of their social behaviour. Here, we are concerned with what majority

others are doing in a specific situation. This norm of “is” is known as *descriptive norms*.

Subject: He/she is a person in the tests or experiments of psychology in whose behaviour the psychologist is interested to test/study/observe. When we call him/her a naïve subject, it generally means that the subject is unaware of the experimental manipulations, if any. An inevitable part of research study, it is the behaviour of the subject which is scientifically measured / observed by the researcher to reach any conclusion.

Confederate: Although part of the experiment just like other subjects, this person is working actually for the experimenter / researcher as his / her associate and performs secretly those tasks as per the instructions of the experimenter during the experiment which are required to achieve the specific objectives of the experiment and are pre-defined by the experimenter.

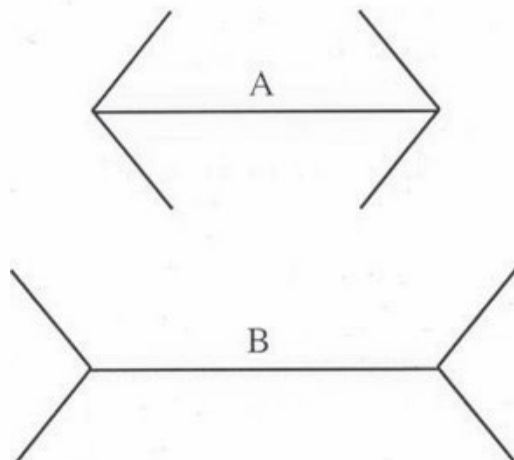
3.3.1 Autokinetic Effect

Also known as autokinesis, the autokinetic word is a combination of two words wherein auto means *self* and kinetic means *motion* and it is a phenomenon of human visual perceptual illusion of movement. Here two words need further elaboration: perception and illusion.

Perception, in simple words means giving some meaning to sensations. For example if I ask you what you are holding in your hand and you reply – a book. The *book* is told by your brain after the instant cognitive analysis process in which, the first process was *sensation* wherein your *eyes* saw the thing in hand and its image was passed onto your brain where the second process, your *past or prior knowledge / experience* gave it a *meaning / name* as you have already been taught in your childhood by your parents/siblings/teachers that this type of a thing is called a book. So, for replying my question you took advantage of two things: your sensation combined with your prior knowledge/experience.

What if any of these two goes missing? If visual sensation goes missing, being blind we shall not be able to see anything. But if we do not have any past knowledge/experience of any particular object, despite seeing it we shall not be able to give it a meaning or name and we shall have just the visual sensation of it. We may then simply try to describe the attributes/dimensions of that thing on the basis of our sensations.

Illusion refers to a mistaken or distorted perception. Have a look on the following two lines and tell which one is longer?



Well, if you say the B line is longer than A, then you are under illusion. Although the B line, having outward arrow flaps, appears to be surely longer than A, there actually is no difference between the two and both the lines are identical in length. This is known as Muller-Lyer optical illusion.

As discussed above, the autokinetic effect is visual perceptual illusion of *movement*. Under this effect, a stationary, small point of light *in an otherwise completely dark visual field or featureless* environment “appears to move”. So, under this illusion of motion of a spot of light, we perceive motion in light which actually is stationary.

It happens because of small, nearly imperceptible eye movements, known as saccades. Since our eyes constantly move by nature and by default and even without our conscious efforts, our brain compensates for this movement in order to create a stable image of the outside world. In this process of compensation, our brain makes use of prior knowledge of background, particularly the knowledge about what moves and what does not.

But, when the brain finds itself in otherwise dark or featureless environment, with no frame of reference or in other words, in an *impoverished* background, it mistakes these small eye movements for the movement in the appearing “otherwise stable” object.

And, once our brain “perceives” the object as moving, this effect of movement is persistent and very realistic. Hence, when only a single light is visible under the above defined environmental conditions, or say in a completely dark room, this light appears to move in unpredictable directions and at variable speeds.

This illusion of movement of otherwise stable objects was first noted by astronomers while staring at a single star in the sky on a very dark night and the first ever records of autokinetic effects have been noticed to be presented by Adams (1912). But the credit of using the autokinetic effect to study the influence of suggestion and formation of social norms goes to Sherif through his world-famous experiment which we are going to study in the next section.

3.3.2 Sherif’s Experiment

Is it not interesting that in library, your voice is automatically lowered while talking to others and you keep the level of noise down even when nobody has directly asked you to do that? Who has then influence on us there? Under the mental representation that others in the library expect us to behave like that in order not to disturb them, your behaviour is guided by the social norm that is prevalent in a library setting.

These norms provide you with particular frames of reference which guide your thoughts, attitudes, emotions, actions and behaviour in specific social situations. These *situational norms* represent generally accepted beliefs about how to behave in particular situations and are learned by associating normative behaviour to these situations (Aarts and Dijksterhuis, 2003).

Studying social influence and conformity has always been close to the heart of social psychologists which Allport (1985) defined as, “an attempt to understand and explain how the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others”. One such highly influential now classic study on conformity and formation of social norms was conducted by Sherif (1936) making use of the autokinetic effect.

Sherif conducted his experiments at the psychological laboratories of Columbia University. The participating subjects were graduates and undergraduate students from either Columbia or New York University. Due care was taken that none of the subjects had previous knowledge of the autokinetic effect phenomenon. A pinpoint of light was presented in all trials in front of the subjects at a distance of about 5 m, in the completely darkened room to produce autokinetic effect. Since there was no external frame of reference, the light appeared to move erratically, even though it was perfectly *still*. Sherif (1936) writes that this novel, ambiguous stimulus provided “objectively unstable situations that would permit themselves to be structured in several ways, depending upon the character of the subjectively established reference points” (p. 91).

Sherif carried out his work in two experimental conditions: an individual situation and a group situation. For individual situation, there were nineteen subjects and forty subjects participated in group situation of the experiment. The subjects were informed that a light would appear and as soon as they saw the light starts moving, they had to press the “signal button”. After the few seconds, the light would again disappear and the subjects were to estimate and tell the extent of the movement of the light.

Half of the subjects took their first 100 trials alone and on three subsequent days, the subjects underwent three more sets of trials, but in groups of two to three. The results indicated that when the subjects were alone, they made their standard estimates (personal norms) in the initial trials around which their remaining judgements fluctuated. They perceived the light moving usually about 2-4 inches but few reported as even 10 inches also. But, when they were in groups, and the group members loudly called out their estimates, the subjects gradually inclined towards the estimates given by other group members including the confederates who, as per the instructions of the experimenter, gave unrealistically exaggerated estimates of the light’s movement. The subjects’ responses were observed to be converged with other group members until a consensus was reached despite the fact that all the estimates were obviously false. Illustrating the powerful effect of conformity in group settings, the subjects accepted the socially shared estimate leaving their self set idiosyncratic standards. It shows that the group norms were formed in the due course of the experiment and conformed by the subjects (Figure 3.1).

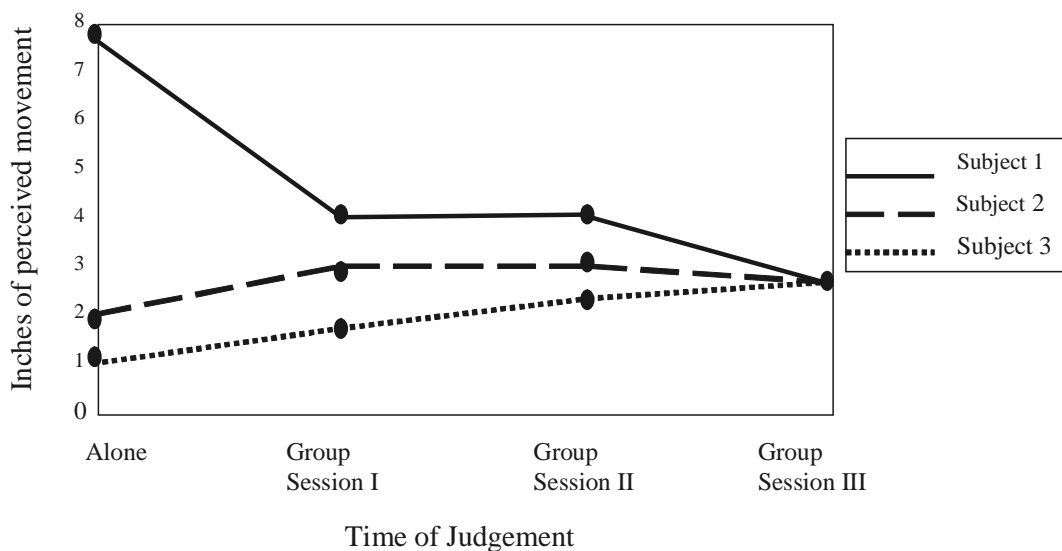


Fig. 3.1: Gradual convergence of subjects’ estimates in Sherif’s experiment (Based on Sherif, 1936)

For the half of the subjects, the order of the experimental procedure was reversed. First, they faced the group situations and then were tested alone. The findings here reflected that the norms were developed in the initial group sessions which were persisted in the later session and were carried along with when the subjects were tested alone – in the absence of others with whom he/she had developed these norms, showing that the norms were *internalised* by the subjects.

Sherif's experiments scientifically studied the social informational influences and internalisation. Summarising his main findings, Sherif (1937) writes as follows:

- 1) "When an individual perceives autokinetic movement which lacks an objective standard of comparison, and is asked during repeated stimulation to report in terms of the extent of movement, he subjectively establishes a range of extent and a point (a standard or norm) within that range which is peculiar to himself, differing from the range and point (standard or norm) established by other individuals.
- 2) When individuals face an unstable, unstructured situation as members of a group *for the first time*, a range and a norm (standard) within that range are established which are peculiar to the group. When a member of a group faces the same situation subsequently *alone*, after once the range and norm of his group have been established, he perceives the situation in terms of the range and norm that he brings from the group situation.
- 3) The ranges and norms established in the above cases are not prescribed arbitrarily by the experimenter or by any other agent. They are formed in the course of the experimental period and may vary from individual to individual, or from group to group, within certain limits." (p. 90 – 91).

3.3.3 Salient Features of Sherif's Autokinetic Experiments

With the detailed reading and minute understanding of the above, we are now in a position to perform an academic postmortem of the autokinetic effect experiment and norm formation. The following crucial characteristic features emerge out of the Sherif's autokinetic experiments:

- 1) *Ambiguity and Uncertainty*: It has been clearly demonstrated by Sherif and other later studies that when there is ambiguity of situational cues and people are uncertain about the right or wrong answer or appropriateness of the behaviour in a given situation or when they are not in a position to judge what and how to respond, they are more likely to conform and follow others and available norms because they do not want to be wrong. Sherif (1936) concluded that unstable situations produce uncertainty and confusion and people assume that "the group must be right" (p. 111) and look to the group for the formation of a common norm. On the contrary, when a person is certain about the information he/she has about the situation, there definitely is no need for him/her to conform to what others say or to conform to others' behaviour.
- 2) *Power of Communication*: In a study, quoted by Yanovitzky and Rimal (2006), the role of informational and normative influence was explored in the context of political communication and it was found that when the group opinions are expressed then the personal opinions are definitely affected. In Sherif's experiments also, the subjects altered their estimates when they

were exposed to others' estimates. So, when we are in communication with others, we form perceptions of the group norms, and (because we are uncertain about the situation and have no information) then we conform to the group norms.

- 3) *Agreement*: Many situations in life are equivocal when we do not have any information about them or logical explanation for them. Then, the group(s), depending upon the situation, interacts in order to enact the agreement which may or may not be based on any rational basis. For example, we take our left side on the road without having any specific rationale behind it. We do not know the reason of taking left side, but we all agree to it in India and many other countries and we all follow it. In Sherif's experiment also, the subjects conformed and agreed to others' judgments.
- 4) *The Reference-Group Effect*: While dealing with an approach to study psychology and culture, the tendency to conform in group situations with those of the same culture/nationals has also been studied and explained as the 'reference group' effect (Heine, Lehman, Peng, and Greenholtz, 2002). Although broad comparisons on conformity involving cultures or nations are yet to be examined and validated it was however clearly depicted by Sherif that his subjects perceived the movement of light in the dark room largely on the basis of their perception of how their group (their reference group) was viewing it.
- 5) *Knowledge convergence*: Jeong and Chi (2007) defined knowledge convergence as an increase in common knowledge where common knowledge referred to the knowledge that all collaborating partners had. The researchers found that collaborative interaction led to the increase in common knowledge. So, knowledge is believed to be constructed through the process of knowledge convergence in which two or more people share mutual understanding through social interaction. Understand this in the light of Sherif's experiment who demonstrated that interaction led to the convergence on a shared norm.
- 6) *Nonconscious Influences on Behaviour*: Last but not the least, one interesting phenomenon has been found in conformity experiments. The subjects mostly deny being influenced by the judgment or responses of others despite the evidence that their attitudes and behaviours were influenced by relevant others. In Sherif's experiments also, the social influence either went unnoticed or was not acknowledged by the subjects as his subjects denied the influence of others' judgments on their estimates given in the presence of their group. Sherif, on the basis of his findings concluded that when objective structure is not available to the individual, "the spoken judgments of other persons have pronounced effects, even though no deliberate attempt is made to exert influence. The individual comes to perceive the situation in line with the views of others, and is frequently unaware that he has been influenced" (Sherif and Sherif, 1969, p. 119, emphasis added). Interestingly, they detect this influence in others.

On the basis of the latest researches and findings, an attempt has been made to describe a few salient features seen in autokinetic studies/experiments which, up to some extent, explain the nature of conformity and norm formation, sometimes leaving some questions unanswered and sometimes generating new questions.

As a student of psychology, you should keep exploring scientifically and explaining logically. In an interesting piece of demonstration to show how norms emerge in groups, Desrochers tried to replicate Sherif’s autokinetic experiment in a classroom but found no norms emerged. Why? The consensus of the students was that the room was not dark enough to produce an autokinetic effect. You might wonder what was the benefit then of this endeavor? Well, Halpern and Desrochers (2005) took it positively while explaining unexpected findings that, “sometimes even a failure to demonstrate a principle can result in a more in depth understanding of a well known experiment”.

3.3.4 Critical Appraisal

Generally social psychology experiments suffer from a more or less common criticism that being conducted in artificial conditions and in laboratory, these do not necessarily represent real social life situations. But, to minutely and scientifically study any given psychological phenomenon, it becomes inevitable for the social psychologists to conduct experiments in lab under carefully controlled conditions. Sherif’s contribution cannot and should not be undermined on the grounds of this criticism.

It was this experiment which significantly contributed to the formation of social psychology as a separate discipline. Moreover, Sherif’s contributions are not acknowledged and referred to in cultural and cross-cultural psychology books, which needs to be corrected (Kađitçibaşı, 2006).

And, it is also important to note that Friedkin, 2001 quoted Festinger (1950) suggesting that “Sherif’s mechanism of norm formation is not merely one of a number of theoretically possible mechanisms that might be studied in laboratory settings, but the *key* mechanism by which persons validate their attitudes under conditions of uncertainty and conflict.”

Over and above all, Sherif succeeded in forming a social norm in the experimental setting.

If any student is still curious that how many of life situations resemble the ones studied by Sherif in laboratory, and what did the later scholars and psychologists learn from Sherif, the next section (3.4) is for you in which some of the latest research studies have been discussed which are motivated and guided by Sherif’s experiments and findings, and are corroborating with his conclusions on norm formation.

| |
|---|
| <p>Self Assessment Questions</p> <p>1) What are the prerequisites to conduct an autokinetic experiment in the laborator?</p> |
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2) Which governs and influences the autokinetic effect in Sheriff's experiment? Discuss in the context of normative influence and informational influence.

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3) What is the role of social influence in autokinetic effect?

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4) Identify and describe the role of social influence in group norm formation in school students and school settings.

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3.4 RELATED LATEST RESEARCH ON NORM FORMATION

Asch's experiment

Asch's studies of group pressure. Asch believed intelligent people would not conform when they could readily see the truth for themselves. Showed people lines - a third of the time subjects were willing to go against their better judgment and agree with the group. About 75% went with the group at least once!

Asch found that three different kinds of reactions had contributed to the conformity.

- 1) *Distortion of perception*: A number of subjects said they were not aware their estimates had been distorted by the majority. They came to see the rigged majority estimates as correct.
- 2) *Distortion of judgment*: Most of the subjects who yielded to the majority concluded their own perceptions were inaccurate. Lacking confidence in their own observations, they reported not what they saw but what they felt must be correct.

- 3) *Distortion of action.* A number of subjects admitted that they had not reported what they had in fact seen. They said they had yielded so as not to appear different or stupid in the eyes of other group members.

Crutchfield did a similar study with military officers. 46% of the time they voted with the group!

One foremost task of any scientific discovery and discipline is to generate further research. As a learner of psychology, you will gradually witness the use and applications of different concepts and constructs by various researchers world wide in the study of a wide variety of psychological phenomena as per their particular research interests.

The above presented scholarly work of Sherif in general and its role in explaining the formation of social norms in particular has led not only psychologists but also experts of allied disciplines like sociology and anthropology throughout the world to examine the applicability of Sherif's findings and conclusions to their respective research objectives. In this section, we have given a brief overview of a few of the latest research studies and findings so that you may have an exposure to the broader applications of any single behavioural principle or the power of any psychological phenomenon in explaining and predicting behaviour in different life domains and social settings.

Uncertainty and self concept

Early studies showed how uncertainty translates into conformity and connection to groups (e.g., Sherif, 1936; Sherif & Harvey, 1952). In particular, when individuals felt uncertain about some task, they became increasingly likely to comply with the norms and behaviours of the group, presumably as a means to diminish this uncertainty.

The mechanism by which groups can reduce uncertainty was, first promulgated by Deutsch and Gerard (1955). These authors delineated the concept of informational influence, in which individuals accept and internalise the norms and beliefs of their group to reduce uncertainty and behave appropriately.

Subjective uncertainty reduction theory, however, recognises a broader range of sources that provoke uncertainty. Such states, for example, could derive from decline in the economy, insecurity in relationships, limited clarity about the self, uncertainty about social interactions, etc. To overcome these feelings of uncertainty, individuals conform to the norms of their group. Such conformity and identity with a group not only clarifies which behaviours or beliefs to embrace but also delineates a definition of self in relation to the social collective.

Sherif's (1936) study has been a good example of testing the role of uncertainty in social influence which was basically caused by an ambiguous stimulus. It has been conceptualised that when we shall face an ambiguous stimulus, it shall affect not only our perception but also judgment. Widening the scope of uncertainty beyond stimulus, Smith, Hogg, Martin and Terry (2007) produced uncertainty related to self conception and found a powerful base of conformity to self defining (ingroup) norms. When induced with academic uncertainty, relationship uncertainty and uncertainty about life decisions, the increased conformity was observed to ingroup norms.

Group norms and excessive absenteeism

In their study on group norms and excessive absenteeism, Bamberger and Biron (2007) explained that in a workplace, the norms and attitudes of peer referents cast a powerful effect on one's attendance behaviour. To examine the effect of reference group norms in shaping one's 'absence' behaviour, they studied various socio-psychological processes. The social influence theory was regarded here as one of the possible explanations of excessive absenteeism and found to have its roots in the early studies like the one conducted by Sherif (1936).

Pro-environmental behaviour and norms

In their meta-analysis of psycho-social determinants of pro-environmental behaviour, Bamberg and Möser (2007) assumed in line with the Sherif's classical study on the informational influence of social norms that it is not the fear of social pressure due to which people follow social norms. Rather, they regard the social norms as information about the appropriateness of a given behaviour. Hence, in addition to the information whether a given behaviour is right or wrong in a specific situation, the social norms also tell us about the potential benefits of this particular behaviour and whether it would be easy for us to perform it.

Descriptive norms and pro-environmental actions

Goldstein, Griskevicius and Cialdini (2007) noted that the behaviour of others in social settings remarkably influences one's interpretations of and responses to various situations and applying social psychology's theory based research of descriptive norms to hotel operations (hotels' linen reuse programmes), they reported that applying the norm of reciprocation and the descriptive norm for pro environment action improved the guests' participation in one hotel's towel reuse programme.

Stock markets' share price and social influence

Siddiqi (2006), as per Sherif's findings, concluded that even in stock market share prices, other people's judgments affect the judgment of an investor. The persons who invest in the market very minutely follow what others think and revise their beliefs in the light of the information about what other investors and market experts believe. This market sentiment is visible with the sudden and significant rise and fall of the market share prices that is many times based on the information about others beliefs and behaviour than the fundamentals of the company/market.

Norms and drinking behaviour

Neighbors et al. (2006), in their study on (1) the stability of normative misperceptions and (2) temporal precedence of perceived norms and drinking, reported that perceived frequency and perceived quantity norms were found to be associated with later drinking. In other words, they supported the basic concepts of conformity that overestimates of drinking norms influence students to drink more (Lewis and Neighbors, 2004).

Using other members' behaviour as information

Hogg and Reid (2006) emphasised that the people, when in groups, observe and take others' behaviour as information so that they may construct a group norm. In the Sherif's study (1935, 1936), the subjects adjusted their estimates of the

movement of light in order to conform and converge on the estimates made by other members of their group.

Rights and duties as group norms

Louis and Taylor (2005) focused on the rights and duties in group based social norms and defined them as the behavioural demands which are rooted in one's social relationships. Hence, they viewed them as, prototypic group norms which are powerful enough to influence the person's behaviour as was illustrated by Sherif (1936).

Journalists' professional behaviour and norms

Describing the causal explanations for the way journalists report the news, Donsbach (2004) noted that journalism was a highly risky business where journalists had to "immediately" decide for most of the time - what was true from the truth point of view, what was relevant from the point of view of the value of the news and what was good or acceptable. It leads the journalists to make factual and evaluative decisions about the news item.

Giving an account of journalists' dilemma in news decisions, Donsbach further lists their four additional problems (time pressure, pressure of competition, lack of objective criteria and publicness) and concludes that the journalists often find themselves in uncertain or undetermined situations just like the subjects of Sherif's experiment. Interestingly, what do journalists do under such uncertain or undetermined situations? Well, they too make decisions in these undetermined situations. According to Donsbach, "the decision about reality, therefore, represents group dynamics and group norms rather than reality. As journalists have similar values and attitudes, more than members of most other professionals, it is rather easy for them to develop a shared reality" (page 143).

However, the group decisions also have quality subject to certain conditions. In a separate work, it has been reported that critical norms improved the quality of decisions whereas consensus norms did not (see Postmes, Spears and Cihangir, 2001).

Crowd sociality and norms

Reicher (2001), while studying the psychology of crowd dynamics, discussed the emergent norm theory of Turner and Killian (1987) who found that collective behaviour often occurs in unusual situations where "redefining the situation, making sense of confusion, is a central activity" as was found in the experiments of Sherif (1936) where uncertainty led to the search/formation of norms.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

The latest trends in research on the classic study of social norms show that the findings of Sherif's experiment have been applied and tested in a wide variety of social and professional settings. Although it is highly important to study individual behaviour but when in groups, the group processes cast their influence on the individual's behaviour. Being associated with this or that group, we have to follow the group norms for various social purposes and psychological benefits.

You would appreciate that the positive aspect of all research is the development and betterment of life. Once we understand the role of social influence and norms in human social life, we may be able to take full advantage of that knowledge for designing various socio-economic developmental programmes which may shape our life and the society in positive and desired directions.

3.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What is autokinetic effect?
- 2) What were the bases of Sherif's autokinetic experiment?
- 3) Critically elaborate the findings of Sherif's autokinetic experiment.
- 4) How did Sherif explain the formation of norms with the help of autokinetic experiment?
- 5) If you have to study the social influence, what behavioural aspects would you study and how?

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UNIT 4 NORMS AND CONFORMITY: ASCH'S LINE OF LENGTH EXPERIMENTS

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Solomon E. Asch – A Leading Social Psychologist
- 4.3 Line and Length Experiments
 - 4.3.1 Asch's Conformity Experiment
 - 4.3.2 Asch's Experiment in Detail
- 4.4 Alternatives Available with Probable Consequences
 - 4.4.1 Variables
 - 4.4.2 Procedure
 - 4.4.3 Results
- 4.5 Explanation of the Yielding Behaviour
- 4.6 Variants in Asch's Experiments
- 4.7 Salient Features
- 4.8 Critical Appraisal
- 4.9 Related Research on Asch's Experiments
- 4.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.11 Unit End Questions
- 4.12 Suggested Readings and References

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In the title and structure of this unit, there is a name. Asch. A social psychologist expert he conducted experiments on norm formation. This unit will be considering all the works of Asch and his experiments which might be of particular interest to you because you might be surprised to see that, under certain experimental conditions, what Asch's subjects said was not in line with what actually they were seeing right in front of them and, further more interestingly, nobody had instructed them not to tell what they were actually seeing. This unit will present the Line and Length experiments conducted by Asch and point out how people knowing fully well what they are perceiving decide to say the contrary which is in line with the groups member's thinking. In addition this unit will present the different experiments with a number of variations from the Asch's experiment. There will also be a critical appraisal of the experiments and the conclusions thereof with regard to norm formation.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the experiments of Asch;
- identify the salient features of Asch's experiment;

- elucidate the concept of conformity and independence;
- Analyse the importance of conformity and independence in social settings; and
- Describe Asch's line and length experiments.

4.2 SOLOMON E. ASCH – A LEADING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGIST



Solomon E. Asch, who also worked with Max Wertheimer at the New School for Social Research (yes, the same Wertheimer who along with Koffka and Kohler founded *Gestalt Psychology* about which you have read in the third unit [Systems and theories of psychology] of the first block [Introduction to psychology, objectives, goals] of your BPC-001 [General Psychology] course), is believed to extend the Gestalt theory to social behaviour and social psychology. When he joined the Swarthmore college he worked with another famous Gestalt Psychologist, Wolfgang Koehler.

Besides Swarthmore College, he also taught at Brooklyn College and the New School for Social Research and held visiting posts at MIT and Harvard. In 1952, he published a book on social Psychology which gave a new direction to the study of social behaviour throughout the world.

Prof. Asch also served as President of the Division of Personality and Social Psychology of the American Psychological Association . Between 1966 to 1972, he held the position of Director of the Institute for Cognitive Studies at Rutgers University and from 1972 to 1979 served as Professor of Psychology in the University of Pennsylvania.

From 1979 onwards, he served at the University of Pennsylvania as Emeritus Professor of Psychology.

He died at the age of 88 years, on February 20, 1996

Asch is also credited for giving directions and new insights to another great psychologist, Milgram in his highly influential research on obedience and authority. He inspired & supervised Milgram's Ph.D research also at Harvard University. He is considered a pioneer of gestalt as well as social psychology and his experiments still give inspiration to social psychology researchers worldwide. Let us have a glance at his classic work.

4.3 LINE AND LENGTH EXPERIMENTS

Sherif's work paved the way for experiments of Asch also as he was interested to see whether the subjects would conform even if the situation involved an unambiguous task. For this purpose, Asch chose *line judgement task* to conduct his experiments. This series of his studies was published in the 1950s (1951, 1952, 1955, 1956, 1957) and his work is also popularly known as the *Asch Paradigm* which is the main theme of this unit which you are just going to read in the following sub-sections.

4.3.1 Asch's Conformity Experiment



Solomon Asch, with experiments originally carried out in the 1950s highlighted a phenomenon now known as “conformity”. In the classic experiment, a subject sees a puzzle like the one in the above diagram. The question is, Which of the lines A, B, and C is the same size as the line X? Take a moment to determine your own answer.

Normally there should be no difficulty to give the answer. However Asch made the subject concerned who was to respond alongside many others who were also looking at the diagram. All these people were confederates of the experimenter. These other “subjects” in the experiment, one after the other, say that line C seems to be the same size as X. The real subject is seated next to last. How many people, placed in this situation, would say “C” giving an obviously incorrect answer that agrees with the unanimous answer of the other subjects? What do you think the percentage would be?

Three-quarters of the subjects in Asch’s experiment gave a “conforming” answer at least once. A third of the subjects conformed more than half the time.

Interviews after the experiment showed that while most subjects claimed to have not really believed their conforming answers, some said they had really thought that the conforming option was the correct one.

It is not a trivial question whether the subjects of Asch’s experiments behaved *irrationally*. Robert Aumann’s experiment 20 years later proved Asch’s experiments, though it formalised and strengthened an intuitively obvious point, that is, other people’s beliefs are often legitimate evidence.

If you were looking at a diagram like the one above, but you knew *for a fact* that the other people in the experiment were honest and seeing the same diagram as you, and three other people said that C was the same size as X, then what are the odds that *only you* are the one who’s right? In terms of individual rationality, you will perhaps.

The conforming subjects in these experiments are not *automatically* considered as irrational, but according to a meta-analysis of over a hundred replications by Smith and Bond (1996), it was observed that conformity increases strongly up to 3 confederates, but does not increase further up to 10-15 confederates. If people are conforming rationally, then the opinion of 15 other subjects should be substantially stronger evidence than the opinion of 3 other subjects.

Adding a single dissenter reduces conformity *very* sharply, down to 5-10%. If the subjects undergoing the experiment are emotionally nervous about being the odd one out, then it’s easy to see how a single other person who agrees with the subject or even a single other person who disagrees with the group as a whole, would make the subject much less nervous.

People are not generally aware of the causes of their conformity or dissent. For instance, in the hypothesis that people are socially and rationally choosing to lie so that they are not the odd one out, it appears that subjects in the one dissenter condition do not consciously anticipate the conscious strategy that they would employ when faced with unanimous opposition.

When the single dissenter suddenly switched to *conforming to the group*, subjects' conformity rates went back up to just as high as in the no dissenter condition. Being the first dissenter is a valuable (and costly!) social service, but one has to keep it up.

Another interesting finding was that consistently within and across experiments, the group which had only female subjects, conformed significantly more often than the group which had all male participants. Around one half the women conformed more than half the time, versus one-third of the men. In group and out group manipulations (e.g., a handicapped subject alongside other handicapped subjects) similarly show that conformity is significantly higher among members of an in group.

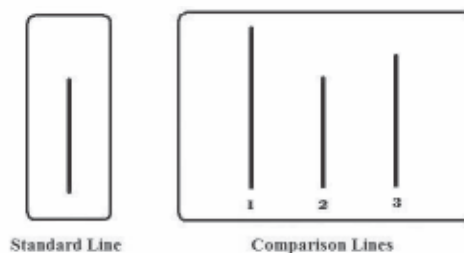
Conformity is lower in the case of blatant diagrams as compared to those diagrams wherein the errors are more subtle.

Another interesting aspect is that when subjects can respond in a way that will not be seen by the group then the conformity drops.

4.3.2 Asch's Experiment in Detail

Asch's main aim was to experimentally study the effect of group pressure on conformity behaviour in an unambiguous situation. Asch used extremely simple perceptual material but exposed the naïve subject to an apparently wrong judgement given by a group of subjects before his turn to reply came. This was done mainly to find out whether he (the naïve subject) reports what he himself is (correctly) seeing or yields/conforms to what the group is (wrongly) saying.

Carefully observe the figure given below wherein you will find two cards displaying lines (a Standard Line and three Comparison Lines), and a group of eight persons watching these lines. Here, the seventh person from left (S7, where S stands for *Subject*) is naïve or *critical* subject and rest all other seven subjects (S1 to S6, and S8) are the experimenter's pre-instructed *confederates*.



(Arrangement after Asch's experiment. S7 is Critical Subject. Rest are Confederates.)

In the following paragraphs, you will find many terms which are frequently used in psychological researches, tests and experiments. An understanding of these related terms and their corresponding information about Asch's experiment is a must to get the gist of his work.

Subjects

Critical Subjects: A total of 123 male college students, between the ages of 17 to 25 (with a mean age of 20 years), drawn from three nearby educational institutions excluding Asch's own College, served as critical subjects. They were naïve and knew nothing about the actual purpose of Asch's study.

Asch was interested in the behaviour of the 'focal' subject that is S7 in the group. As this subject was being exposed to the group and social pressure or influence during experimental manipulations. Generally the subject (S7) was seated at the end or at second last position in the row so that they may well hear what the earlier participants are saying. By the time the subject's turn comes to respond, the responses of the other members of the groups are already known to the subject and the possibility of his being influenced by their responses is also quite high. To find out if this is so, the experiment was conducted.

Confederates: These subjects were actually the associates of Asch. They (S1 to S6 and S8) were also called the majority and were there to cooperate with the experimenter in the experimental plans. They were all pre instructed to give either right or wrong answers on already fixed trials. They were also told to do this job very cleverly and carefully so that the critical subjects do not come to detect 'their plan'. Their unanimity even in giving wrong judgements was also a unique feature of the experimental plan.

Task

The main task was to match the lengths of lines (few inches) under optimal conditions and announce the judgement. The subjects were told in the experiment that it is a *psychological experiment in visual judgement* and that they would be shown two cards: one bearing a standard line and other having three comparison lines: numbered 1, 2, and 3. The subject was given the task of (i) to select the line from among the three comparison lines that was equal to and matched in length with the standard line. (ii) After that they have to speak loudly and announce publicly its number (1st, 2nd or 3rd line). In each trial, a new set of standard and comparison lines was used. Asch used a very simple discrimination task with easily perceivable difference in length of the comparison lines. Actually, Asch was not interested in confusing his critical subjects over the length of lines.

Trials

Total 18 trials were taken in a series with each group consisting of two trials, viz., (i) Neutral trials and (ii) Critical trials.

Neutral Trials: Out of 18, 06 trials, introduced at different serial numbers as tabled below, were those neutral trials on which the confederates also gave "correct" judgements.

Critical Trials: Rest 12 were the critical trails on which the confederates publicly announced “pre-decided” wrong answers.

The following was the sequence of a particular trail in Asch (1956) experiment:

| Sl. No. | Trial Code | Type of Trial | Type of answer of the confederates |
|---------|------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| 01 | A | Neutral Trial | Correct Judgement |
| 02 | B | Neutral Trial | Correct Judgement |
| 03 | 1 | Critical Trial | Majority responds incorrectly |
| 04 | 2 | Critical Trial | Majority responds incorrectly |
| 05 | C | Neutral Trial | Correct Judgement |
| 06 | 3 | Critical Trial | Majority responds incorrectly |
| 07 | 4 | Critical Trial | Majority responds incorrectly |
| 08 | 5 | Critical Trial | Majority responds incorrectly |
| 09 | 6 | Critical Trial | Majority responds incorrectly |
| 10 | D | Neutral Trial | Correct Judgement |
| 11 | E | Neutral Trial | Correct Judgement |
| 12 | 7 | Critical Trial | Majority responds incorrectly |
| 13 | 8 | Critical Trial | Majority responds incorrectly |
| 14 | F | Neutral Trial | Correct Judgement |
| 15 | 9 | Critical Trial | Majority responds incorrectly |
| 16 | 10 | Critical Trial | Majority responds incorrectly |
| 17 | 11 | Critical Trial | Majority responds incorrectly |
| 18 | 12 | Critical Trial | Majority responds incorrectly |

You might perhaps note that first nine trials (a – 6) have been repeated (d – 12) and there was no break in between anywhere. As per column number four, the confederates were pre-instructed to give set responses. But, the critical subjects were also independent to give any answer as per their perception or as they wanted it in any or all the 18 trails. Actually, this was the thing in which Asch was interested that in clearly conflicting 12 *critical trials*, whom or what will the critical subjects follow: their own perception or the majority group giving unanimously incorrect responses. No discussion was allowed during the trials and the subject was to give any response he liked/disliked. After the experimentation, the subjects were interviewed also wherein they were given the details of the experiment and experimental procedure and asked about their experiences.

4.4 ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE WITH PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES

If you were in a situation like the above as a critical subject where there is clear conflict in your perceptual judgement and the judgement of the majority, what

possible alternatives you think were available with you for giving any judgement on a particular critical trial. If you think as given in the table below, you are right.

Table: Nature of pressure and available alternatives

| Nature of Force | Possible alternative available | Perceived/imagined probable consequences |
|---|---|--|
| The evidence of one's senses (you are seeing the stimulus right there in front of you). | Announce what you are seeing or give judgment based on your own perception of the stimulus (<i>Independence</i>). | You are contradicting the group and declaring that the unanimous majority has given wrong judgement. |
| The unanimous opinion of a majority group (giving wrong answers on pre-defined trials as instructed by Asch). | Follow the majority even if they are wrong and give judgement in line with theirs (<i>Conformity</i>). | You are suppressing the testimony of your own perceptual experience, but you will not be considered <i>odd man out</i> . |

4.4.1 Variables

Independent Variable: If Asch was not concerned with the varying lines of his stimuli in various trials, then what else was it? As you have just read above, it was the responses of the confederates on critical trials (wrong answers) which he intelligently manipulated as independent variable.

Dependent Variable: Asch was interested in exploring/studying whether subjects conform or yield to the wrong answers of the unanimous majority or stand independent in giving their responses on the critical trails.

4.4.2 Procedure

Keeping in mind the seating arrangement of subjects in the psychology lab and the sequence of the trials, let us proceed further to see how the experiment was progressed.

Trial 01: A pair of cards carrying standard and comparison lines was presented before the group and was asked to announce their respective judgements in the order they were sitting. Their responses were noted. All gave similar judgment.

Trial 02: Another pair of cards, again carrying standard and comparison lines was presented and the group was asked to announce their respective judgements as pervious trial. Their responses were again noted and found that all gave similar judgment.

Trial 03: Remember that the first two trails were neutral trials. This was followed by the 3rd trial which was 'critical' trial. Here again, a new set of cards was presented before the subjects but S1 (the confederate) gave wrong answer. Then, S2 (again, the confederate) too gave the same but wrong answer. Third subject, S3 (the confederate) followed the first two accomplices. So, did the fourth, fifth and the sixth. By the time his turn came, the startled subject S7 (the critical, naïve subject) was totally confused and disturbed. What his group members had responded was not correct and he knew the correct answer. But, what to tell? That, what he is perceiving right in front of him OR that, what the group members

had just announced one by one before him? Well, what ever he replied was noted by the experimenter.

This way, the remaining trials were completed as per experimental design, and with all the critical subjects. The results of the experiment are presented below.

4.4.3 Results

The main findings of Asch are summarised below:

- 1) When the same task was conducted with the Control Group (N = 37), without any misleading majority, without any experimental manipulation, the perceptual or judgmental errors occurred less than 01% of all the judgements. So, more than 99% accurate judgments were found under controlled conditions.
- 2) Taking the results of all 123 subjects together, the naïve subjects yielded to the group pressure and conformed to the misleading majority's wrong responses in 36.8% of the judgements showing that the unanimous majority distorted one-third of the reported estimates.

This is a serious matter of concern because the task was, as you have seen, very simple, easy and matter of fact, and most importantly, the subjects were free to given their actual responses, yet they conformed to the group pressure and gave the replies in the direction of the group's *wrong* judgement.

Towards a positive explanation of the findings, however, we can say that approximately two third (63.2%) of the responses were independent, correct, beyond group pressure and were not distorted in the direction of wrong majority. And, this is important.

However, *individual differences* were also noted in the experiment. For instance

- About 25% of the subjects were completely independent throughout the experiment.
- About 5% subjects always went with the wrong majority 'without exception', nearly all the time.
- Internal consistency was obtained in the responses and judgement of the subjects in the experiment.
- Those who were independent in the initial trials remained independent later also, and those who conformed from the starting were always yielding to the group judgements.

4.5 EXPLANATION OF THE YIELDING BEHAVIOUR

The post-experiment interviews helped Asch to further understand why did the minority subjects yield to the apparently wrong judgements of the majority. Their conformity and yielding to the wrong majority was explained as given below:

1st Level: *Yielding at the perceptual level*

Although occurred rarely and in the subjects who had low levels of self confidence and lack of trust in themselves, the subjects felt that they had actually *seen* the

lines the way the majority announced their judgements. These subjects were not aware of the conflict and believed their group to be right.

2nd Level: *At the judgmental level*

This occurred rather frequently. That is, the subjects yielded to wrong majority in giving incorrect answers either because they could not ensure themselves as to whether they had understood their task or the experiment properly or because they did not want to spoil the experiment. They were aware of the conflict but also believed their group to be right.

3rd Level. *Yielding at the action level*

This category of subjects were very much aware of their yielding to the wrong majority and felt highly uncomfortable while yielding but yielded because they feared being considered odd man out or considered an eccentric person and being excluded from the group. Thus, they were aware of the conflict and also knew that their group was wrong.

4th Level: *Explaining the independence*

Asch (1955) also explained the reasons of observed independence where his subjects did not conform to the wrong majority and maintained their independence and enjoyed their freedom to speak the perceived truth. Few subjects had this committed confidence in themselves that led them to report their own perceptual judgements and they had the capacity to recover the doubts caused by the wrong majority. Few others reported that they sometimes believed that the majority to be correct but they preferred to tell what they actually perceived.

4.6 VARIANTS OF ASCH'S EXPERIMENTS

Studying the aspects of influence of group further, Asch was interested in few other variables which he thought might influence the respondent's behaviour. He modified his experiments by (i) changing the size of majority, (ii) bringing variations in the unanimity of wrong answers, etc. The results found are given in the table below.

i) *Variations in Size of majority*

Asch was also interested to see if the size of the majority had any influence on the respondents' behaviour. He varied the size of the majority from 01 to 15 and with each condition, of course, new critical subject was required. He found:

| Number of critical subjects | Number of confederates | Effect/Findings |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|---|
| 01 | 01 | Very little effect, and the subjects continued to respond independently. |
| 01 | 02 | Substantial pressure was found and 13.6 % wrong answers were obtained. |
| 01 | 03 | Errors jumped to 31.8%. Found fullest possible effects of majority. |
| 01 | 04 – 15 | Further increase in size of majority had no further substantial increase of pressure on subjects. |

These findings led Asch to conclude that the size of the opposing majority was important only up to a certain number in influencing the subjects. Beyond that, the size did not matter.

ii) *Variations in Unanimity*

By now, we have seen only one critical subject, *all alone*, in Asch's experiments. What, if we have two critical subjects (minority of two) against the majority of seven to nine?

In this variation, the findings revealed that the presence of a supporting partner reduced the group pressure to one fourth and the critical subjects exhibited a high level of independence.

But, what if this another dissenter joins the majority after six trials? Asch found that there was an abrupt increase in the yielding to the erring majority and there was a sudden increase in subjects' errors. This shows that the presence of another dissenter, that is a supporter brings the strength and confidence of the critical subjects back and help them maintain their independence. And, that is perhaps the reason for that the number of errors of the critical subjects increased suddenly after the departure of the dissenter.

4.7 SALIENT FEATURES

A minute reading of the above experiments brings out some unique features which further clarify the phenomena of conformity and independence. Let us have a close look on few of these.

Character of the task

Unlike Sherif's autokinetic experiment as seen in the previous unit, the task in the Asch's work was clear, unambiguous and obvious, an easily perceivable matter of fact. The standard and comparison lines were right there in front of the eyes of the subjects. They had to simply see and compare the readily perceivable lines and to tell what they saw while giving their judgment.

Nature of subjects

There was no manipulation in the stimulus lines but with the *confederates* who cooperated with the experimenter and produced an apparent conflict between the actual matching line and the reported one, the manipulation was with the confederates' responses which the *critical / naïve subject* (minority) was free to copy or not to conform.

Discussion

There was no discussion amongst the subjects during the experimental trials and there was no direct persuasion from the side of confederates. Each subject was independent to give the answer of his choice in all the trials.

Public announcement

The loud pronouncement of confederates' judgement had a crucial effect on most of the subjects. This was clearly more evident in the experimental condition when they were allowed to give their judgements in writing.

Immediacy

When we hear others around us saying their views loudly, we are certainly influenced most of the times to give similar responses or views, particularly when we are in such a situation that requires us to respond immediately.

Uneasy disagreement

When there was a clear conflict in what they saw to be actually right, but not spoken by the group members and also they were going to conform (though unwillingly), this condition was not an easy one for the subjects. Thus they exhibited the symptoms of uneasiness because they were just going to reply against their perception under group pressure.

Public disagreement

Most of the persons resist and do not conform or yield to wrong group pressure. They publicly disagree and maintain their individuality for whatsoever the reasons may be.

Number matters, but not as a rule

In Asch's experiment, another interesting finding revealed that up to a certain extent the number of persons in a group had influence on an individual's behaviour but beyond a given limit, too big group was found to have no effect.

4.8 CRITICAL APPRAISAL

Very recently, Dalal and Misra (2010) rightly stated that Asch's work had a clear-cut message that conformity is bad as it produces wrong judgements (p. 146 – 147). We can sense this when we read Asch (1955, p. 34), "*That we have found the tendency to conformity in our society so strong that reasonably intelligent and well-meaning young people are willing to call White Black is a matter of concern. It raises questions about our ways of education and about the values that guide our conduct.*" Thus, concerned with the ill effects of conformity in polluting the social process, Asch advocated the fostering the values of *independence* in the social beings.

After minutely analysing 99 social psychology textbooks that got published in US between 1953 and mid-1984, it was found that the authors had often distorted Asch's findings, accentuated the role of conformity and underestimated that of independence.

However, one issue raised by Leyens and Corneille (1999) seems pertinent to be presented here, "... *Asch did not pursue the reasoning when he dealt with social relations, at least in his famous "conformity studies."* There, he tried to show *independence rather than interdependence, and his experimental manipulations prevented any interaction between participants.*

Contrary to Lewin, who focused on interactions, Asch never studied them even if he briefly wrote about them. The paradox is that his conformity studies are usually presented in the group section of contemporary textbooks, when it may well be that Asch influenced social psychology by leading the researchers away from "real" interactions" (p. 354 – 355).

The issue raised by Leyens and Corneille needs to be adequately addressed because *interaction* is a unique and characteristic feature of any social situation and a group, and if there is no discussion and/or *interaction* permitted among the group members even on the demands of the experiment, can the mere proximate physical presence of few persons be safely termed as a *group*?

If we look at the psychological description of a *group*, Shaw (1981) finds one thing common in all groups: their members interact. He therefore defined a group as two or more persons who interact and influence one another. Also, according to Turner (1987), the members of groups have feelings of “we” and perceive themselves as “us” in contrast to “they”. More than fifty years ago, Bales (1950) also says, “A small group is defined as any number of persons *engaged in interaction with each other* (emphasis added) in a single face-to-face meeting or a series of meetings, in which each member receives some impression or perception of each other member distinct enough so that he can, either at the time or in later questioning, give some reaction to each of the others as an individual person, even though it be only to recall that the other person was present.”

Whether you call the Asch’s subjects a group *per se* or not, there are definite psychological studies, revealing that even *mere presence of others* influence and enhance one’s performance, under the term *social-facilitation*. However, the same is not always true and some researchers have also found that the presence of others can hinder the performance as well.

What actually matters the most here, however, is that we need to learn and take lessons from Asch and his work for the advancement of social psychology like Rozin (2001), who had been the colleague of Solomon Asch at the University of Pennsylvania for eight long years before Asch’s retirement. Secondly, if we are convinced that independence should be preferred over conformity, we should find and foster the ways to (a) combat the pressures to conform and (b) promote independence.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What were the bases of Asch’s research?

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2) Describe the importance of confederates of Asch’s experiments.

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3) Explain the reactions of the subjects when they had to give judgements contrary to their perceptions.

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4) Comparatively analyse the variants of Asch’s line and length experiment.

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4.9 RELATED RESEARCH ON ASCH’S FINDINGS

Working with a group of chimpanzees, Whiten, Horner and de Waal (2005) reported evidence of a conformity bias that has been identified in human studies by researchers like Asch (1956) as a powerful tendency to discount personal experience in favour of adopting perceived community norms.

The credit for doing the first ever study of brain activity and finding the biological evidence associated with perceptual and emotional processes during social conformity and independence goes to Berns, Chappelow, Zink, Pagnoni, Martin-Skurski, and Richards (2005).

To investigate the neural basis of individualistic and conforming behaviour while facing wrong information, they used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) technology and a task of mental rotation in group pressure situations (with a modification of the Asch paradigm). They reported that conformity was associated with functional changes in an *occipital–parietal* network and activation of the amygdala in independence or, in other words, when the participants went against the group opinion.

In order to study the relationship between conformity and culture, a meta analysis was performed by Bond and Smith (1996) utilising 133 studies, drawn from 17 countries, that used Asch’s line judgement task. They found that motivations to conform were weak in Western societies than elsewhere and collectivist countries revealed conformity more than individualist countries. In another work, while Perrin and Spencer have been reported by Amir (1984) to unable to replicate the ‘Asch effect’, he found the ‘Asch effect’ replicable in Kuwait with Kuwait University students.

To explain the conformity behaviour of the subjects of Asch’s experiments, Noelle-Neumann, who formulated the spiral of silence theory in 1974, later used

the fact that “the subjects in Asch’s experiment saw ‘with their own eyes that the line selected by majority as the best match is not the best match’ as evidence that *fear of isolation* is the dominant factor influencing conformity (quoted in Scheufele and Moy, 2000).

In order to apply teach the social psychology in their classroom settings, Stephan Desrochers (see Halpern and Desrochers, 2005) used Asch’s line comparison task for tardy students. He made the classroom seating arrangement in a way that the two late comer two students naturally get the last two seats after coming late to the class. Other students who used to be in time formed a small group to act as confederates and Desrochers told them their role to give wrong perceptual judgement about the matching lines. The tardy students arrived late by five minutes while the sheet carrying standard and comparison lines was being passed. The students were informed that in that basic perception experiment, they were to tell the comparison line matching with the standard line. After listening to other students’ responses, the late comer students stared at the lines thinking about other students’ responses. One of them even said loudly that other’s response did not seem to be correct at the first glance, but, being so different from others’ judgment, she doubted her own perception. After some apparent struggle, both of them conformed to the class. This practically taught the students in general and the tardy ones in particular the power of social influence.

As we saw in the previous unit also that research further generates research and leads to advancement of knowledge and understanding of a given phenomenon. The same applies here also. Finding possible explanations for the behaviours of the critical subjects of Asch where they had altered their responses (perceptual judgements) in conformity with the group, you might also say ... following Cronback (1946) that, they deliberately or intentionally altered or distorted their responses to appear more socially favourable. Well, this *impression management* is a factor of *socially desirable responding*. In addition to studying the personality correlates of conformity, the conformity behaviour may also be studied and explained in terms of social desirability by the interested social psychologists to further understand the underlying dynamics of conformity.

4.10 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have learned about another great social psychologist, Solomon E. Asch and his experiments on conformity and independence. Using the clear, unambiguous stimulus, he has been able to show that under group pressure and social influence, many people give responses contrary to their apparently correct perception conforming to the group’s wrong perceptual judgements.

His findings, like Sherif’s, have inspired social psychologists worldwide to study *group processes* from a new perspective. Although we have also found that they, for the most part, have been found to divert the main assertion of Asch, or, at least, have avoided *independence* highlighted equally by Asch in his experiments and writings. With just one book and a few articles to his credit, he gave a new line of thought to all. Even recently researchers focused and studied the biological basis of conformity and independence, and found separate brain areas working for these distinct social processes.

Ending this unit here, we present a new starting point for further research: Coming back to the original experimental situation of Asch, *nothing personal* of the critical subjects was on stake. What would the persons do in *actual social life situations* if they well-perceive the possible future *consequences* of their behaviour of conformity and/or independence on themselves and their lives? If their behaviour is going to actually affect their real personal life, will they still conform to what the others are saying but they are perceiving it different, something contradictory and not matching with their previous learning or the social reality?

4.11 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What is comparatively more important: conformity or independence, and why?
- 2) Write a brief note on the Galileo's saying that 'sun was stationary and the earth revolved round the sun' in light of Asch's paradigm.
- 3) From a fresher student's point of view, can *ragging in educational institutions* be explained in terms of conformity and independence?
- 4) If you have to study conformity on similar lines with Asch, what experimental study would you plan in a given social setting of your choice? Give complete details in terms of variables, experimental controls and proposed procedure.

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