

**BLOCK 2**  
**INDIVIDUAL LEVEL PROCESSES**



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## INTRODUCTION

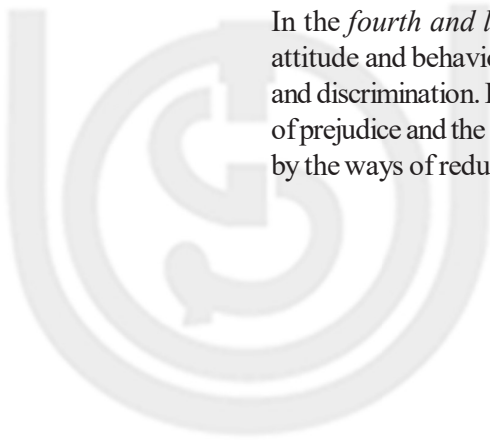
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This block comprises of four units which deals with the social cognition. It should be mentioned here that, social cognition is the way by which we process social information. The *first unit* deals with the concepts of schema and heuristics and the unit explains the modes of social thought. The unit also discusses about the sources of errors that affects our social cognition. With the help of this unit you will come to know about the role played by our cognitive processes in social interaction with others.

The *second unit* discusses about the process of social perception and describes the ways in which we perceive others in different social situations. It will also deal with the theories of attribution, in order to know whether the behaviour of a person originated from his or her internal dispositions or there were some external situational factors that caused the particular behaviour. The unit will also explain the process by which an overall impression of others interacting with us in social situations is formed. Lastly, we will illustrate the errors we commit in attribution process.

In the *third unit* of this block, we will discuss the meaning and definition of attitude. We will further explain the components, types and functions of attitude. We will also describe the process and theories of attitude formation and change. We will also discuss the issue pertaining to relationship between attitude and behaviour. Lastly, we will also try to understand the concept, process and relevance of persuasion.

In the *fourth and last unit* of this block, we will discuss the relationship between attitude and behaviour. We will also understand the concepts of stereotype, prejudice and discrimination. By the end of this unit, you will also come to know about the sources of prejudice and the disguised forms of discrimination. Lastly, you will also be acquainted by the ways of reducing stereotype, prejudice and discrimination.



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## UNIT 2 SOCIAL COGNITION: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR-I\*

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## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the meaning of social cognition;
- Describe meaning, types and impact of schema;
- Explain the concept and relevance of heuristics; and
- Discuss the sources of errors in social cognition.

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\* Dr. Ari Sudan Tiwari, Scientist 'E', Defence Institute of Psychological Research, Ministry of Defence, Lucknow Road, Timarpur, Delhi-110054 (INDIA).

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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Human beings are social animals. They think, feel and act by involving themselves, others and larger collectives throughout every moment of the day. The enormous yet seemingly natural tasks of social perception, social memory, and social decision-making in which they engage; and the by-products of such tasks constitute the study of social cognition. *Social cognition is defined as the process by which we interpret, analyze, remember and use information about the social world. In the other words, social cognition is the way by which we process social information.* More specifically, while studying social cognition social psychologists attempt to answer following important questions of social lives of human being:

- How do we register, encode, classify, store and utilise the overflow of information in our social world?
- What processes our cognitive system follows when we receive information about others in order to form an overall impression of them?
- What we do in order to understand the reasons behind and origins of behaviours of people around us?
- Is the processing of social information biased? What biases and errors generally we commit in the process of social perception?

Social psychology has very vigorously attempted to answer these questions in its branch of social cognition. In this unit we will understand the concepts of schema and heuristics and the modes of social thought. We will also discuss about the sources of errors that affects our social cognition. With the help of this unit you will come to know about the role played by our cognitive processes in social interaction with others.

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## 2.2 SCHEMA

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Our social interactions are largely guided by our expectations regarding the people involved in the interactions, roles played by them in the specific situations, norms guiding behaviours of people involved in the interaction and the likely events and actions in the situation. Such expectations originate from our previous experiences and knowledge of people, roles, norms and events of similar kinds. Social psychologists refer it as *schemas*. Schemas are defined as *cognitive structures containing broader expectations and knowledge of the social world that help us systematically organise social information.*

Schemas contain not only some precise and explicit illustrations, they also include our inferences and assumptions about of the persons, events, situations, etc. Schemas help us to predict the likely behaviours of people occupying specific roles in a social interaction and sequence of actions in a particular social event. Further, schemas influence the process of encoding, storage and retrieval of social information. They also guide us in making inferences about the information which is not available to us in a particular social situation. By all its functions, a schema significantly reduces the efforts we put forth in processing the social information.

### 2.2.1 Types of Schema

Social psychologists have categorised schemas into different types: person schemas, self-schemas, group schemas, role schemas and event schemas.

### 2.2.1.1 Person Schemas

Cognitive structures that attempt to illustrate the personalities of others are called as person schema. Person schemas try to explain personalities of either specific persons (such as Mahatma Gandhi, Mahatma Buddha, J. R. D. Tata, etc.) or explain personalities in terms of some universal types (such as extravert, introvert, sober, sociable, depressive, submissive, etc.). Person schemas help us in classifying and organising our understanding about the personalities of people around us and lead to make internal predictions about their behaviour. Person schemas, often referred as person prototypes, generally consist of a composition of personality traits that we use to classify people and to predict their behaviour in particular situations. Generally dominant personality traits are utilised as criteria for categorising people in our social world. Based on observations during our interactions we may infer that 'A' is submissive or that 'B' is honest or 'C' is dominant. This helps us in making expectations in our social interactions and giving us a sense of control and predictability in the situation.

### 2.2.1.2 Self Schemas

Similar to the way we receive, encode, store and utilise the information about other people, we develop schemas that describe our self-concept based on past experiences. *Self schemas are cognitive representations about us that organise and process all related information* (Markus, 1977). Self schema is developed from the traits that we think as core of our self-concept. Self schemas describe the components that uniquely characterise and define our self-concept. We have different context specific self schemas that are activated in different social situations. For example, self schema of A as commanding and dominant when he is in his office may be opposite from his self schema as submissive and obedient when he is with his father.

### 2.2.1.3 Group Schemas

Group schemas, often referred to as stereotypes, are the schemas regarding the people representing a particular social group or category (Hamilton, 1981). Stereotypes specify the traits, qualities, attributes and behaviours presumably characterising the members of that social group or category. In our social interactions we try to understand our social world with the help of number of stereotypes about people of different castes, religious groups, specific geographical regions, speaking different languages, ethnic groups, etc.

### 2.2.1.4 Role Schemas

Role schemas characterise traits, qualities, attributes and behaviours of persons with a particular role in a group. Role schemas help us in understanding and predicting the behaviours of persons who occupy specific roles in a social group. Role schemas are categorised in various ways. For example, there are role schemas associated with various occupational roles, such as teachers, scientists, doctors, sales managers, HR managers, etc. Similarly, role schemas are also associated with other kinds of roles in social groups, such as group leader, captain of a sports team, etc. Our initial interactions with a person are broadly guided by the cues that prominently visible to us. However, as our familiarity with the person increases importance of such physical cues is reduced and trait-based person schemas are given more importance in guiding our social interactions Fiske (1998).

### 2.2.1.5 Event Schemas

Event schemas, also referred to as scripts, are cognitive structures that describe the expected sequences of actions and behaviours of people participating in an event in our

everyday social activities. We explicate scripts by asking people to describe that what actually happens in a particular social event, what is the sequence of these actions and what types of behaviours people do during the event. For example, if we are asked to explain the appropriate behavioural sequence of an Indian classroom, we can very vividly describe the behavioural sequences of teacher and students. The phenomenon of event schema or script indicate that we store the behaviours that are appropriate in particular situation for our broad understanding and whenever we are encountered to such situation the script is automatically activated in order to facilitate our smooth interaction in the situation.

### 2.2.2 Impact of Schema

Our social environment is flooded with information at any given time and it is beyond our cognitive capacity to process all those information instantly. We cannot respond to all those social stimuli in equally efficient manner and therefore, we are required to focus on some of the most relevant and important information. Schemas provide us a practical tool to make precise social judgements up to an extent by helping us in registering, encoding, categorising, organising, storing, comprehending and retrieving the social information and consequently, making decision about the appropriate behaviour in a given situation.

**Schemas are theory-driven:** Being originated from our previously acquired knowledge about the social surroundings, schemas function as 'theory-driven' structures that enable us to classify and organise our specific social interactions and broader social experiences. This suggests that the information available in the social environment is rarely used in social interactions, instead schematic theories operate subconsciously in the background and therefore, we comprehend and act in a novel social situation based our schema driven assumptions (Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

**Impact of schemas on memory:** Human memory is mainly considered as reconstructive in nature. In place of remembering all specific fine points of social encounters and situations, we generally remember only prominent details characterising and defining the situations which activate the schema when we require and subsequently schema fills in other minute details. Such impact of schema on memory suggests that schemas further determine that what details will be remembered and which details will be forgotten. When we try to recall about a social event, we are more likely to remember those details that are consistent with our schemas than those that are inconsistent (Cohen, 1981).

**Impact of schemas on inferences in social interactions:** Most of our social interactions are facilitated by the schema driven assumptions and inferences we draw about various people in our social surroundings (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). At number of occasions there are large gaps in our understanding of the social situations which are filled up by the schema. When we are unaware of certain information about someone, we draw some inferences consistent with our schema in order to create a coherent and complete understanding of the person. For example, if you know your roommate who is fitness crazy, you can infer that he will love company of another friend of yours who is a sports person.

**Impact of schemas on social judgements:** Several schemas, particularly person schemas represent the cognitive structures referring our evaluations, judgements and affective orientations about people and events in our social environment. Therefore, when a particular schema is activated it leads us to view the associated social stimulus in the categories of good-bad, normal-abnormal, positive-negative, etc. and consequently, it strongly elicits feelings consistent with our evaluations.

**Schemas are integrated and stable in nature:** Schemas are developed and strengthened with our experiences in particular social situations and further they are stored in the form of integrated structures of associated components. During our social interactions even a single accessed component of a schema is capable of activating the whole schema, as strong associative links exist among the components of the schema (Fiske & Dyer, 1985). Once schemas are developed and are recurrently activated during our social encounters they become relatively stable part of our social thought process and further they resist change even when we are encountered with the evidences inconsistent with the existing schemas.

### Self Assessment Questions 1

Fill in the following blanks:

- 1) ..... influence the process of encoding, storage and retrieval of social information.
- 2) Most of our ..... are facilitated by the schema driven assumptions and inferences we draw about various people in our social surroundings.
- 3) ..... which are often referred to as stereotypes, are the schemas regarding the people representing a particular social group or category.
- 4) Cognitive structures that attempt to illustrate the personalities of others are called as .....
- 5) Self schema is developed from the traits that we think as core of our .....

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## 2.3 MODES OF SOCIAL THOUGHT PROCESSING

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### 2.3.1 The Continuum Model of Processing

Our presumptions and prejudices often result into distorted thoughts and biased evaluations. However, our thought process is not always guided by presumptions and prejudices in order to minimise cognitive efforts like cognitive misers. Instead, we often analyse the social information in a very cautious, vigilant, systematic and piecemeal (progressive) manner. Fiske and Neuberg (1990) suggested that we process social information along a continuum starting from category driven schematic processing to data driven systematic processing. They further suggested that category driven schematic processing is employed in the when information is explicit and less important to the person; whereas, data driven systematic processing is employed when the information is confusing and comparatively more significant for the person. Data driven systematic processing is employed also when we require very high accuracy in our social judgements. We encounter with different people in our everyday social interactions. With their varying importance to us we decide that that up to what extent information regarding them is systematically processed and data regarding which people will be superficially processed in order to form their impressions.

### 2.3.2 Automatic vs. Controlled Processing

We follow two distinct ways of approaches of information processing in our social thought: an organised, logical, and highly purposeful approach known as controlled processing, or a quick, relatively effortless and intuitive-spontaneous approach known as automatic processing. Devine (1989) applied the difference between the two ways of processing to explain the process by which stereotypes are activated.

Devine proposed that we acquire a number of social stereotypes during our childhood years through the process of socialisation. Such stereotypes are further strengthened by repeated exposure in our social encounters and consequently they become an integral part of our social knowledge structure. In our subsequent encounter with the social groups the corresponding knowledge structures are activated automatically without our conscious and purposeful thinking. Devine (1989) further argued that the stereotypes are automatically activated with almost equal strength for those who are high prejudiced, as well as for those who are low prejudiced. Devine also demonstrated that stereotypes are activated in both high and low prejudiced people; even when cues for stereotypes were subliminally presented and therefore, participants were not consciously aware of cues presented to them.

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## **2.4 HEURISTICS: THE MENTAL SHORTCUTS**

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In our everyday social interactions, we are flooded by information which generally exceeds the capacity of our cognitive system. In such situations, we devise and employ various strategies which help us to maximum utilisation of our cognitive resources in minimum cognitive efforts; consequently leading to an automatic, rapid, spontaneous and effortless social thought process. Using heuristics, a type of mental shortcuts, is one of the most prominent such strategies in which we make complex decisions in an automatic, rapid, spontaneous and effortless manner by using simple rules. At a certain time, many schemas are available to us which may guide our social interactions. We employ heuristics in order to select a particular schema to guide our social interactions. Some of such heuristics are discussed below.

### **2.4.1 Availability Heuristics**

Some schemas are more frequently used in our social interactions than others. A schema which is most recently used is more readily available to us to guide our social interactions. Schwarz et al. (1991) proposed a different explanation to availability heuristics in terms of ease of retrieval. They argued that schemas consistent with the examples which are easier to remember are more readily available and therefore, used in our social thoughts. Thus they emphasised the ease of remembering a particular example associated with certain schema than the number of times the schema is used.

### **2.4.2 Representativeness Heuristics**

Representativeness heuristic is often used when we are faced with situations with high level of uncertainty. In such situations, we generally focus on very essential properties of the social entities and match them with various schemas held in our cognitive system. Furthermore, the schema which most closely resembles with the characteristics of the particular social entity is selected. In certain situations, representativeness heuristic becomes so strong that it is employed even in the presence of contradictory evidences and statistical information.

### **2.4.3 Anchoring and Adjustment Heuristics**

In a situation where we are required to take a social decision or to express our opinion on some social issue about which we do not have expertise, we usually try to make a guess based on a somewhat workable cue. This cue functions as a starting point or as an anchor and further we make modifications and adjustments in the starting point in order to arrive at our final decision or opinion.

Suppose that you are asked in an exam to provide the population of Delhi. If you do not know that population but you know the population of Haryana, you might use the



population of Haryana as an anchor and thinking that Delhi must be somewhat smaller than Haryana, adjust the population of Haryana downward to produce your guess. In most cases of social judgements, we generally use ourselves as an anchor.

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## **2.5 SOURCES OF ERRORS IN SOCIAL COGNITION**

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As a human being, we consciously desire to think logically in order to make somewhat error-free decisions, evaluations and judgements about people and events in social surroundings. However, at various occasions our social thought process ignores certain logical standards and we put in less cognitive effort to comprehend our social world which subsequently leads to errors in our social cognition.

### **2.5.1 Cognitive-Experiential Self Theory**

Cognitive-experiential self theory argues that many times we prefer our intuitive thoughts based on past experiences over logical thinking in order to evaluate a social situation. For example, when a cricket player scores a century with a pair of shoes he continues to wear the same pair of shoes in coming matches as well despite the probable dangerous consequences of wearing an old pair of shoes. Such intuitive thoughts originate from the past experience that the old shoes were lucky for him.

### **2.5.2 Paying Attention to Inconsistent Information**

When we encounter with a person in a social situation, information inconsistent with his/her role draws our attention even at cost of some consistent and even more relevant information. Social psychologists have provided evidence that inconsistent information is better remembered than the consistent information about gender roles. Bardach and Park (1996) reported that the participants remembered the qualities inconsistent with a gender ('nurturant' for males and 'competitive' for females) better than those that are usually inconsistent with a gender ('adventurous' for males and 'emotional' for females). The findings indicated that the inconsistent information may be preferred over important consistent information leading to potential errors in social cognition.

### **2.5.3 Negativity Bias**

The negativity bias refers to the notion that, even when of equal intensity, human being has the tendency to give greater weight to negative social information and entities (events, objects, personal traits, etc.) as compared to positive ones. When traits differ in terms of their positivity and negativity, negative traits are disproportionately impact the final impression.

### **2.5.4 Planning Fallacy**

While deciding about the time we will take to complete a task, we often underestimate the time needed and at the time of execution we generally overshoot the time period that we had assigned to ourselves. This is known as planning fallacy. The reason for this is that while initially taking the decision about the time required, we generally focus on events or actions to occur in future rather than focusing on the time we had taken to accomplish a task in the past. This tendency disallows us to do a realistic estimate of time needed. Furthermore, at the time of initial decision-making, even if one is reminded of the excessive time incurred in the past, the delay is usually attributed to some external factors rather than one's own capabilities to the finish the work in time.

### **2.5.5 Potential Costs of Thinking Too Much**

At number of occasions, we excessively do careful thinking resulting into confusion,

frustration and wrong judgement. Wilson and Schooler (1991) asked half of their research participants to “simply rate” the several strawberry jams and the other half of them to “deeply analyse” the reasons for the ratings they themselves gave to each jam. The researchers also took the opinion of experts (who professionally compared various products) about the correctness of judgement made of the two groups of participants. They found that, according to the experts, the judgement of the second half of the participants (consisting of participants who deeply analysed their own rating) were not as accurate as that of the first half (consisting of participants who simply rated the jams).

### **2.5.6 Counterfactual Thinking**

Counterfactual thinking is a tendency in which people think contrary to what actually occurred. People think about the already occurred events by framing some possible alternatives in terms of “What if?” and the “If I had only...” For example, a cricketer thinks that “what could have happened if played in that match!”

### **2.5.7 Magical Thinking**

Magical thinking is the kind of thinking that involves irrational assumptions often associated with law of similarity or law of contagion. Law of similarity states our assumption that people similar to each other in appearance may be having similar fundamental characteristics. For example, some children might not like to eat a biscuit in the shape of a lizard. Law of contagion is the belief that when two people or objects come in contact with each other, they pass on their properties to one another and such an impact last long even after the contact is over. For example, one might not like to wear the coat used by an HIV patient even after it is dry-cleaned.

#### **Self Assessment Questions 2**

State whether the following are ‘True’ or ‘False’:

- 1) Magical thinking is a tendency in which people think contrary to what actually occurred .....
- 2) Cognitive-experiential self theory argues that many times we prefer our intuitive thoughts based on past experiences over logical thinking in order to evaluate a social situation .....
- 3) Representativeness heuristic is often used when we are faced with situations with high level of uncertainty .....
- 4) Our presumptions and prejudices never result into distorted thoughts and biased evaluations .....
- 5) Heuristics are a type of mental shortcuts .....

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## **2.6 LET US SUM UP**

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Thus, it can be summed up that social cognition is a very relevant process at individual level. This process is facilitated by cognitive representations of the social world in our minds called schemas. Distinct types of schemas, person schemas, self-schemas, group schemas, role schemas and event schemas; function as organising structures influence the encoding, storing, recall of complex social information and social judgements. To deal with the state of information overload in the social situations where the demands on our cognitive system are greater than its capacity, people adopt various heuristic

strategies. In our everyday social interactions, we are flooded by information which generally exceeds the capacity of our cognitive system. The unit started with the explanation of concept and meaning of social cognition, which was followed by the meaning, types and impact of schema. The unit also explained the concept and relevance of heuristics. Finally the various sources of errors in social cognition were also discussed in the present unit.

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## 2.7 UNIT END QUESTIONS

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- 1) Define the concept of social cognition and schema?
- 2) Describe various types of schema and also evaluate its impact on social thought process.
- 3) Present an account of modes of social thought processing as proposed by psychologists and also explain various sources of errors in social cognition.
- 4) Discuss the various sources of error involved in social cognition.
- 5) What is the role of heuristics in social cognition? Describe various types of heuristics employed in social cognition.

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## 2.8 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

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### Self Assessment Questions 1

- 1) Schemas
- 2) Social interactions
- 3) Group schemas
- 4) Person schema
- 5) Self-concept

### Self Assessment Questions 2

- 1) False
- 2) True
- 3) True
- 4) False
- 5) True

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## 2.9 GLOSSARY

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- Social cognition** : The process by which we interpret, analyze, remember and use information about the social world.
- Schemas** : Cognitive structures and representations of social world in our minds that help us organise social information and contain general expectations and knowledge of the world.

**Individual Level Processes**

- Person schemas** : Cognitive structures that organise our conceptions of others' personalities and enable us to develop expectations about others' behaviour.
- Self schemas** : Cognitive representations about us that organise and process all related information.
- Group schemas** : Also called stereotypes, are schemas regarding the members of a particular social group or social category and indicate that certain attributes and behaviours are typical of members of that group or social category.
- Role schemas** : Indicate that certain attributes and behaviours are typical of persons occupying a particular role in a group and are often used to understand and to predict the behaviours of people who occupy roles.
- Event schemas** : Often referred to as cognitive scripts, describe behavioural and event sequences in everyday activities; specifies the activities that constitute the event, the predetermined order or sequence for these activities, and the persons (or role occupants) participating in the event; provide the basis for anticipating the future, setting goals and making plans.
- Heuristics** : Cognitive strategies to deal with the state of information overload in the social situations where the demands on our cognitive system are greater than its capacity.

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**Individual Level  
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## UNIT 3 SOCIAL COGNITION: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR-II\*

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### Structure

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  - 3.4.3 Self-Serving Bias
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- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Unit End Questions
- 3.7 Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 3.8 Glossary
- 3.9 Suggested Readings and References

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the concept of person perception and impression formation;
- Discuss the various theories of attribution;
- Illustrate the process of impression formation; and
- Elucidate the ways in which people generally commit errors in person perception.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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The present unit of the block will explain the process of social perception and describe the ways in which we perceive others in different social situations. We will also illustrate the theories of attribution in order to know whether the behaviour of a person originated from his or her internal dispositions or there were some external situational factors that caused the particular behaviour. We will also understand the process by which an overall impression of others interacting with us in social situations is formed. Lastly, we will illustrate the errors we commit in attribution process.

\* Dr. Ari Sudan Tiwari, Scientist 'E', Defence Institute of Psychological Research, Ministry of Defence, Lucknow Road, Timarpur, Delhi-110054 (INDIA).

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## 3.2 PERSON PERCEPTION

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We perceive people with whom we interact in the social surroundings quite differently from the way we perceive non-living things. We do so primarily because we evaluate and judge people based on assumptions and inferences regarding the intentions behind their behaviours. Often we make assumptions about the persons' internal state which significantly influences the perceptions and judgments we do regarding that person's actions. Person perception is the area of social psychology which studies the process by which we form impressions of other people with whom we interact in our real or virtual social surroundings and also that how we make inferences about them. The area of person perception also analyses the cognitive process involved in making decision that which information is attended, registered and encoded when we interact with other people, how we evaluate these information and how this evaluation affects our subsequent social behaviour.

### 3.2.1 Impression Formation

We receive information regarding people around us from a variety of sources. These sources may include the written facts about the person, something which is told to us about the person by other people or behaviour of the person which we directly observe. During our social interactions, we may form an impression of a person on the basis of his or her obvious and visible features, such as look, clothing, way of verbal communication, etc. We may further make assumptions about the personality traits of the person on the basis of these physical characteristics. Although we receive information regarding people around us from a variety of sources, we are primarily concerned with organising and assimilating such diverse information into a coherent picture. Impression formation is the process by which we amalgamate diverse facts in order to form an integrated impression of people around us.

Understanding people in a vacuum is a difficult task. Therefore, we explain others' personality in terms of their traits. Traits function as building blocks of how we construe others' personality. In many cases, in order to form impression of others' personality we combine whatever information, in terms of personality traits, we find in a person possibly in a mathematical way. We assign some positive or negative value to all the traits inferred in the person and then we may derive an additive value or an average value of those traits.

#### 3.2.1.1 Trait Centrality

When we try to form an impression of a person, we give greater importance to some traits as compared to others. For example, this has been reported that when we notice negative information regarding a person, we give more emphasis to it than the positive information.

Asch (1946) presented empirical evidence to the view that when we form impression of a person some traits play more important role than others. Asch (1946) presented a list of traits of an imaginary person to one of his two research groups. The list included seven traits: *intelligent, skilful, industrious, warm, determined, practical and cautious*. The list which was presented to the second research group differed in the manner that the trait "*cold*" replaced the trait "*warm*". After being presented with the list of traits, participants of both the research groups were asked to write a short description of the impression they formed of the imaginary person and also to rate the person on another list of characteristics: generous, wise, happy, good-natured, humorous, sociable, popular, humane, altruistic and imaginative.

The findings revealed that when the traits "warm" and "cold" shaped the overall impression formed by the research participants to a great extent. In the "warm" trait



condition, the imaginary person was evaluated as happy, successful, popular and humorous. While in “cold” trait condition, he was perceived as self-centred, unsociable and unhappy. Furthermore, a considerable qualitative difference was observed in the overall impression of the imaginary person as written in the description of the person by both “warm” and “cold” trait groups. This evidence was substantiated when the basic research procedure was replicated with a minor innovative change that in the list of traits the trait of “warm-cold” was replaced by “polite-blunt”. Results indicated that difference in the impression formed in polite vs. blunt trait conditions was significantly lesser than that of warm vs. cold. The findings suggested that different traits vary in their centrality value in order to form impression of others. The trait which has greater influence on overall impression is considered to have higher trait centrality value.

### 3.2.1.2 First Impression

Individuals make conscious efforts to create a good impression when entering into the interviewing room, joining a new group or meeting with an important client. People generally do so because they think that the first impression which we form on others is particularly significant and also it has a considerably stable impact. This view originates from the researches on *primacy effect* (Luchins, 1957) demonstrating that when we form an impression of other people information received early is attached with greater value than the information received later.

Social psychologists have proposed various explanations for primacy effect. Firstly, once impression of a person is initially formed, it affects how we process information received later regarding the person. When later on we receive information about the person, it is registered, encoded and interpreted in such a way that it is consistent with our first impression. For example, once we form impression of a person as honest and later on we find that he or she is not returning some money borrowed from a friend 2-3 months back. With the background that we have initial impression of the person as honest, from the newly observed behaviour we may infer that the person may have financial constraints or he or she may have forgotten to return the money. Thus, the already formed impression functions as a schema into which the information received later is assimilated and the existing schema significantly influences the way of interpreting new information. Secondly, the primacy effect assumes that we tend pay greater attention to the information received early and the information received later is somewhat ignored once we get the amount of information which we consider sufficient to make a judgment. Thus, instead of interpreting the information received later differently; we in fact tend to ignore it or use it less (Dreben, Fiske, & Hastie, 1979).

Despite being an important phenomenon, primacy effect does not always occur. In some conditions, our impressions are most affected by the set of information which we receive most recently. This phenomenon, opposite to the primacy effect, is known as the *recency effect* (Jones & Goethals, 1971). Recency effect is most likely to occur when there is such a considerable time gap after the formation of first impression that its trace has been lost. Recency effect is seen also when we are primarily concerned with evaluating transient qualities, such as moods or attitudes.

#### Self Assessment Questions 1

Fill in the following blanks:

- 1) ..... presented empirical evidence to the view that when we form impression of a person some traits play more important role than others.
- 2) Person perception is the area of social psychology which studies the process by which we form ..... of other people with whom we interact in our real or virtual social surroundings.

- 3) The person perception also analyses the ..... involved in making decision that which information is attended, registered and encoded when we interact with other people.
- 4) The already formed impression functions as a ..... into which the information received later is assimilated.
- 5) ..... effect is most likely to occur when there is such a considerable time gap after the formation of first impression that its trace has been lost.

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### 3.3 THEORIES OF ATTRIBUTION

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While interacting with people in our social surroundings, we largely focus on their behaviours and their effects. However, we are also interested to the reasons behind others' behaviours. It requires making inferences ahead of our general observations of behaviours. For example, if we see someone being very aggressive in public, we are interested to know that why is he doing so? Is the person aggressive by nature? Or is he is using aggression as an instrument to achieve some hidden goal? Is there something inherent in the environment which is stimulating the person to be involved in the aggressive behaviour? We are concerned to understand the reasons behind the behaviours primarily because it helps us to predict future behaviour of people around us in order to act effectively in the social environment. This process by which we try to infer causes behind the other persons' behaviours is referred to as *attribution*. We infer causes behind others' behaviours generally in terms of persons' intentions, their abilities, traits, motives and the situational factors that lead a person to some specific behaviour. Various attribution theories discuss the process by which we interpret behaviours in order to infer their causes.

#### 3.3.1 Heider's Naive Psychology

Although we are concerned about understanding and inferring the personality traits of people with whom we deal with during our social interactions, their behaviour may be caused by both their personality attributes; as well as by the environment in which behaviour takes place. Thus, the actions of people do not always originate from their personality; they may originate from the situation also. Heider (1958) opined that causal attribution is the process by which we infer the causes behind behaviour of other people. While doing causal attribution, we try to deduce that the behaviour was originated from which of the two causes.

Fritz Heider (1944, 1958) proposed that in regular social interactions people try to find out the causes behind the behaviour of other people by using commonsense reasoning. The process and method of finding out the causes of behaviour is performed as "*naive scientists*" and is similar to the scientific method. Therefore, Heider argued that in order to understand the process by which people do causal attribution social psychologists are required to focus on commonsense reasoning employed by common people.

Heider proposed that while doing causal attribution, people are primarily focused on understanding whether the behaviour is attributed to the person's internal state, referred to as dispositional attribution; or to the environmental factors, referred to as situational attribution. For example, attributing a person's aggressive behaviour to his or her internal states or characteristics, such as irritability, bad temper, hostility is an instance of dispositional attribution. On the other hand, judging the aggressive behaviour originating from the situational factors, such as being aggressive under provocation; refers to situational attribution. As a perceiver, our decision to attribute behaviour to the personal

dispositions or to the situational factors is based on our evaluation of the strength of situational pressures on the actor. Under strong situational pressure, we generally go with situational attribution.

### 3.3.2 Correspondent Inference Theory

Correspondent inference theory (Jones & Davis, 1965) proposes that in order to make inference that a person's behaviour originated from personal dispositions, we firstly focus on the intention behind the particular behaviour. Then we try to infer whether such intentions were caused by personal dispositions or not. However, making such inferences becomes difficult because any particular behaviour may produce number of effects. Therefore, to be convinced by our attributions we try to discern that which of the effects the person actually intended and which were simply incidental. As a perceiver, our decision about which of the several effects of the person's behaviour was actually intended depends on the factors that include the extent to which the effects were common, the extent to which the effects were socially desirable and the extent to which the behaviour complied with the normative perspective (Jones & Davis, 1965).

Firstly, the principle of non-common effects refers that we infer a person's behaviour corresponding to an underlying disposition when the behaviour has an exceptional or non-common effect which could not be produced by any other behaviour.

Secondly, we tend to infer a person's behaviour corresponding to an underlying disposition when the outcomes consequent to the behaviour are socially undesirable. Being engaged in socially desirable behaviours simply indicates our tendency to appear normal and similar to other people and does not specify any personal disposition. However, low socially desirable behaviours are inferred as a consequence of a personal disposition.

Finally, the perceiver evaluates the normativeness of the behaviour in order to infer that the behaviour is resultant of the person's personal disposition. Normativeness refers to the behaviour which is normally expected from a person in given social situation. When behaviour does not conform to the social norms in the situation the behaviour seems to have been freely chosen and not forced on the person in question. Jones and Davis (1965) further argued that the behaviours complying to the social norms generally do not reveal about the individual dispositions. Alternately, the behaviours that contradict social norms are attributed to the personal dispositions.

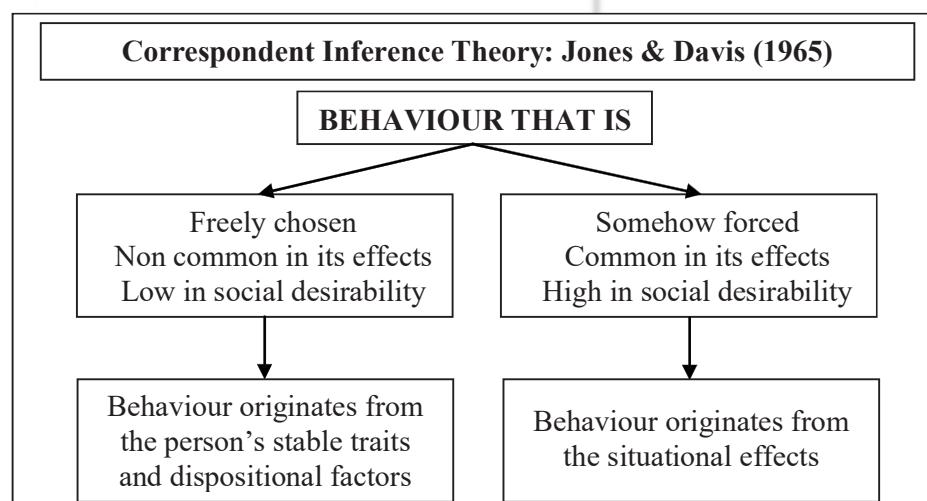


Fig. 3.1: Correspondent Inference Theory

Thus, correspondent inference theory states that we are most likely to conclude that others' behaviour reflects their stable traits and dispositional factors (i.e., we are likely to reach correspondent inferences about them), when that behaviour is freely chosen, yields distinctive, non-common effects and is low in social desirability.

### 3.3.3 Covariation Model

The theories discussed in the preceding sections primarily focus on make attribution of behaviour on a single instance. However, in real life situations we make attributions of person's behaviour based on information obtained from several instances. Such multiple behavioural observations and comparisons do not only facilitate the process of causal attribution, but also increases the accuracy of attribution. Kelley (1967, 1973) proposed that we process and analyse the information regarding a person's behaviour obtained from several observations in the same way a scientist does. Kelley argued that there may be various possible factors or causes of behaviour. In order to identify these causes covariation principle is applied. We attribute the behaviour to the factor that is both present when the behaviour occurs and absent when the behaviour fails to occur; the cause that co-varies with the behaviour.

Suppose, while going toward your office you notice a road accident. There may be at least two potential causes to which the accident may be attributed: internal causes (personal attributes of the person involved in the accident, such as rough driving), external causes (abrupt driving by others, sudden exposure to damaged road). Kelley (1967) proposed that while employing the principle of covariation to determine whether the behaviour was caused by the internal causes or external causes, people focus on three types of information: consensus, consistency and distinctiveness.

*Consensus* is the extent to which people react to a given stimulus or event in the same manner. It refers to whether all persons behave in the same way or only a few people behave in that way. For example, whether all persons driving on that side of road meet an accident (high consensus), or is that person only who has encountered with an accident while driving on that side of road (low consensus)?

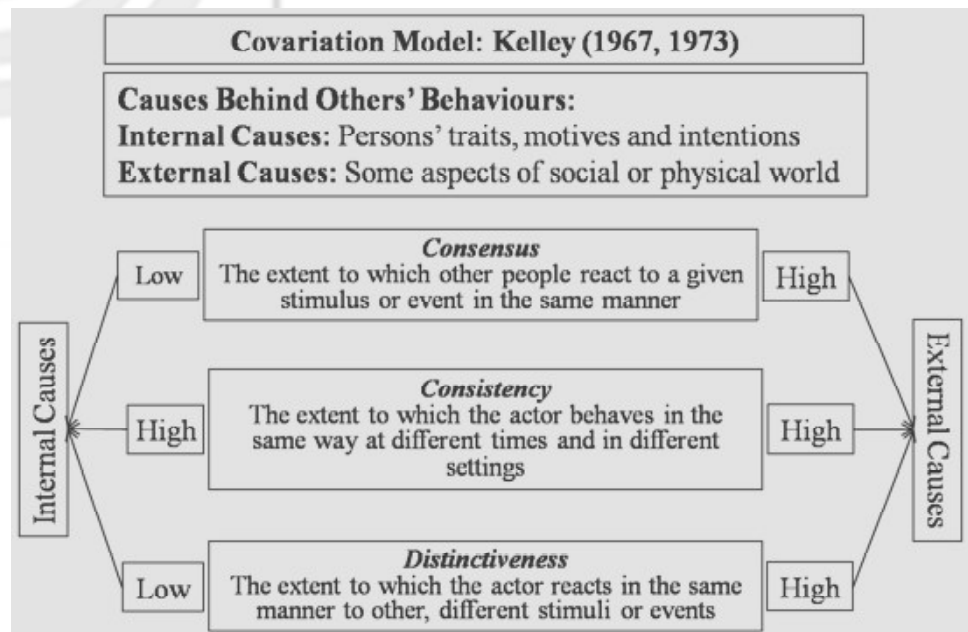


Fig. 3.2: Covariation Model (Kelley, 1967,73)

*Consistency* refers to the extent to which the person behaves in the same way at different occasions and situations. If the person meets an accident on many different occasions, his/her behaviour is (similar) high in consistency. If s/he has been never met a road accident earlier, his/her behaviour is low in consistency.

*Distinctiveness* refers to the extent to which the person behaves in a unique/distinctive way to various stimuli or events. The individual will show low distinctiveness if s/he behaves similarly in all situations while there exists a high distinctiveness when the individual shows the behaviour in particular situations only. If the person always gets involved in a road accident whenever s/he drives, even when s/he drives on other roads, his/her behaviour (getting involved in the accident) is low in distinctiveness. If the person does not get involved in an accident on other roads, his behaviour is high in distinctiveness.

The causal attribution for the behaviour depends on the particular combination of consensus, consistency and distinctiveness information that people associate with that behaviour. People usually attribute a behaviour to the internal causes (personal characteristics of the person, the driver) when the behaviour is low in consensus, low in distinctiveness and high in consistency. In contrast, people usually attribute a behaviour to the external causes (rough driving by other drivers, the context/damaged road) when the behaviour is high in consensus, high in distinctiveness and high in consistency.

### 3.3.4 Attribution of Success and Failure

In the age of tremendous competition in all spheres of our lives, people around us evaluate our performances and make attributions regarding our successes and failures. For example, success of a sports team in an important competition may be attributed to several causes. The team's success may be attributed to the intrinsic ability of the team members, effort exerted by the team members, easy competition due to weak opponents or even luck. Thus, there may be four factors of success or failure: ability, effort, task difficulty and luck.

In order to decide that which of these four factors was the actual reason behind the success or failure, perceivers firstly determine the locus of control of the success or failure. That is, whether the reason of success or failure was within the actor (internal or dispositional attribution) or it was caused by some environmental factors (external or situational attribution). Secondly, the perceiver determines the degree of stability of the success or failure. That is, whether the reason behind the result was an enduring characteristic of the actor/environment (stable) or it was varying (unstable). The perceiver can make a final attribution of success or failure only after deciding the internality-externality and stability-instability aspects of the causes.

<b>Causal attribution of success and failure</b>		
		Locus of Control
Degree of Stability		
Stable	Internal	External
Unstable	Ability	Task Difficulty
	Effort	Luck

**Fig. 3.3: Causal attribution of success and failure**

Weiner (1986) proposed that the four factors of success or failure can be arranged in the form of a matrix along the dimensions of internality-externality and stability-instability of the causes. For example, ability is usually considered as an internal and stable factor. Ability is primarily interpreted as an internal characteristic of the individual and it is considered as a stable property which does not varies quickly. On the contrary, effort is an internal and unstable property. Effort is exerted by the individual (internal) and also, the same individual may exert different amount of efforts at different occasions and at different tasks (unstable). Task difficulty is an objective characteristic of the task (external) that remains constant for a particular task (stable). Luck or chance is an external and unstable factor.

Performance of a person is attributed to internal or external causes after comparing his or her performance with that of others. Extraordinary performances, regardless of good or bad, are generally attributed to internal causes. We are more likely to evaluate a student as exceedingly able or extremely motivated who secures very high grades in an extraordinarily tough examination. Likewise, a student with unusually poor performance is perceived as weak in ability or very low in motivational aspect. On the contrary, an average performance is generally attributed to external causes. A mediocre performance of a student in an examination is attributed either to the tough competition or to misfortune.

Whether observers attribute a performance to stable or unstable causes depends on how Consistency in the individual's performance over time plays a vital role in attributing a performance to stable or unstable causes. Consistent performances are usually attributed to the stable causes. A student's consistent high grades in different examinations over a period of time are more likely to be attributed either to his or her intelligence (ability) or to the low level of the examination (task difficulty). Inconsistent performances are usually attributed to the unstable causes (varying efforts or luck/chance).

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### **3.4 ERRORS AND BIASES IN ATTRIBUTION**

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As explained by various attribution theories, perceivers examine their social surroundings, process information, form impressions and interpret behaviours in a seemingly rational and logical manner. Nevertheless, perceivers often diverge from the logical methods described by attribution theories and commit many errors and biases in this process leading the perceivers to misinterpret the received information and to make flawed attribution. We will now consider the biases and errors that are most pervasive in the process of attribution.

#### **3.4.1 Fundamental Attribution Error**

Fundamental attribution error refers to a tendency in which we augment the impact of situational or external factors and reduce the impact of dispositional or internal factors while attributing behaviour. Jones and Harris (1967) presented an empirical evidence for fundamental attribution error in an experiment in which he gave an essay to read to American college students. The essay either supported or criticised the Castro government in Cuba. However, the research participants were differently informed regarding the choice of position taken by the essay writer. The experimenters informed half of the participants that the essay writer was free to choose his or her position, 'pro' or 'anti' Castro, while writing the essay (choice condition). While the other half of the participants were informed that the position, 'pro' or 'anti' Castro, taken by the essay writer was directly assigned to them (no-choice condition).

While being asked to evaluate the true attitude of the essay writer towards the Castro government in Cuba, the participants viewed the writer's attitude consistent with the

opinions expressed in the essay, regardless of the condition that the writer had choice to take his or her position in the essay (choice condition) or not (no-choice condition). Experimenters further reported that although the research participants did not completely ignore the fact that the writers of no-choice condition were assigned the position to take, they attached less importance to it and overestimated the attitudinal disposition of the essay writer. Thus, the impact of the no-choice condition (situational or external factor) was underestimated and the choice component (dispositional or internal factor) was overestimated. This error results from a failure by the observer to fully apply the subtractive rule.

### 3.4.2 Actor-Observer Bias

Actor-observer bias refers to the tendency to attribute other's behaviour to internal/dispositional factors, while attributing our own behaviour to situational/environmental factors (Jones & Nisbett, 1972). For example, a student who fails in an examination justifies his or her result to tough question paper, very strict evaluation, not getting sufficient time for preparation, some sudden engagements in family, etc. However, he or she explains similar results of other students by lack of their ability, carelessness, indiscipline, etc. It has been observed that in clinical settings the clinical practitioners tend to view their clients' problem related to their internal stable dispositions, while the clients justify their problems by the situational factors.

Arguably, actors and observers view each others' performances with distinct perspectives. When we are actors, we are not able to see our own behaviours. Rather the situational factors influencing our behaviour are more readily noticed. However, when we are an observer the person's behaviour is more prominent than the environmental and contextual factors influencing the behaviour. Such differential perspective of actors and observers lead to situational attributions for actors and dispositional attributions for observers.

Furthermore, as an actor we are able to see our behaviours at different occasions and at different places. Therefore, the information regarding the factors pertaining to the situation and context are more readily available to us. However, as an observer we are able to see the person's behaviour only at one instance and in one situation. Consequently, we tend to presume that unlike us, other people behave in same way at other occasions as well. In the other words, we presume higher level of consistency in other person's behaviour as compared to our own behaviour which leads to make dispositional attributions for others and situational attributions for own behaviour (Nisbett et al., 1973).

### 3.4.3 Self-Serving Bias

Self-serving bias refers to a general tendency that we acclaim for our achievements, but do not see ourselves responsible for our failures. We generally claim that we succeeded at a task due to our sheer ability (internal factor). However, we justify our failures with misfortune or task difficulty (external factors). As an individual we have a strong need to enhance our self-esteem when we achieve something significant, to protect the self-esteem while faced with failures. Miller and Ross (1975) referred internal attribution to the successes as the self-enhancing bias, and external attribution to the failures as the self-protection bias.

### 3.4.4 Ultimate Attribution Error

Ultimate attribution error refers to the self-serving bias operated at the group level. It suggests that we have strong tendency to defend our own group while making attributions.

Pettigrew (1979) suggested that relations between two groups largely affect the attribution members of each group make for the members of other group for similar types of behaviours. Positive and socially desirable behaviours of the members of our own group are attributed to internal qualities; however, similar behaviours of the members of the other group are attributed to external factors. On the other hand, negative behaviour of the members of our own group are attributed to internal factors, while similar behaviour of members of other group are attributed to internal traits.

### **Self Assessment Questions 2**

State whether the following are 'True' or 'False':

- 1) Actor- observer bias refers to a general tendency that we acclaim for our achievements, but do not see ourselves responsible for our failures. ( )
- 2) Ability is primarily interpreted as an internal characteristic of the individual. ( )
- 3) Consistency is the extent to which people react to a given stimulus or event in the same manner. ( )
- 4) Heider (1958) opined that causal attribution is the process by which we infer the causes behind behaviour of other people. ( )
- 5) We tend to infer a person's behaviour corresponding to an underlying disposition when the outcomes consequent to the behaviour are socially undesirable. ( )

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## **3.5 LET US SUM UP**

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It can be concluded from the above discussion that, social cognition is the way by which we process social information. During social interactions we organise diverse information into a unified coherent manner to form an impression of the other person. Also, by the process of attribution people try to infer the causes of other persons' behaviour. We observe another's behaviour and infer backward to its causes that explain why people act as they do. Various theories of attribution focus on the methods we use to interpret another person's behaviour and to infer its sources. Although the process of social cognition is seemingly rational, observers often deviate from the logical methods and commit many errors and biases in this process leading to misinterpret events and to make erroneous judgements.

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## **3.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS**

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- 1) Explain the theories of attribution.
- 2) Discuss the causal attribution of behaviour.
- 3) Explain the process of impression formation and present empirical evidences for trait centrality and first impression.
- 4) Explain various errors and biases committed in attribution.

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## **3.7 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

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### **Self Assessment Questions 1**

- 1) Asch (1946)
- 2) impressions



- 3) cognitive process
- 4) schema
- 5) Recency

### Self Assessment Questions 2

- 1) False
- 2) True
- 3) False
- 4) True
- 5) True

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## 3.8 GLOSSARY

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<b>Impression Formation</b>	: The process by which we organise diverse information into a unified coherent manner to form an impression of the other person.
<b>Trait Centrality</b>	: Phenomenon that some traits of a person are weighted more heavily and have large impact than others on the overall impression we form of that person.
<b>Primacy Effect</b>	: Phenomenon that observers forming an impression of a person give more weight to information received early than to information received later.
<b>Recency Effect</b>	: The most recent information we receive exerts the strongest influence on the impressions we form of others.
<b>Attribution</b>	: The process that an observer follows to infer the causes of another's behaviour.
<b>Correspondent Inference Theory</b>	: Others' behaviour reflects their stable traits and dispositional factors when that behaviour is freely chosen, yields distinctive, non-common effects and is low in social desirability.
<b>Principle of Covariation</b>	: We attribute the behaviour to the factor that is both present when the behaviour occurs and absent when the behaviour fails to occur.
<b>Consensus</b>	: The extent to which other people react to a given stimulus or event in the same manner as the person we are considering.
<b>Consistency</b>	: Whether the person behaves in the same way at different times and in different settings.
<b>Distinctiveness</b>	: The extent to which the person reacts in the same manner to other, different stimuli or events.

- Attribution of Success and Failure** : The process to find out causes of success and failure of ours and that of others.
- Fundamental Attribution Error** : The tendency to underestimate the role of situational or external factors, and to overestimate the role of dispositional or internal factors.
- Actor-Observer Bias** : Tendency to attribute other people's behaviour to dispositional factors and to attribute our own behaviour to situational factors.
- Self-Serving Bias** : Tendency to accept credit for success and deny responsibility for failure.
- Ultimate Attribution Error** : Tendency to make attributions that protect the group we belong to.

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## UNIT 4 ATTITUDE AND ATTITUDE CHANGE\*

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### Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Meaning and Definition of Attitudes
- 4.3 Structure of Attitudes
- 4.4 Types of Attitudes
- 4.5 Functions of Attitudes
- 4.6 Attitude Formation
  - 4.6.1 Mere Exposure
  - 4.6.2 Personal Experience
  - 4.6.3 Classical Conditioning
  - 4.6.4 Operant Conditioning
  - 4.6.5 Observational Learning
  - 4.6.6 Genetic Factors
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- 4.8 Let Us Sum Up
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- 4.10 Glossary
- 4.11 Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 4.12 Suggested Readings and References

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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning of attitude;
- Describe components, types and functions of attitudes;
- Elucidate the process of attitude formation; and
- Discuss the process of attitude change.

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\* Dr. Ari Sudan Tiwari, Scientist 'E', Defence Institute of Psychological Research, Ministry of Defence, Lucknow Road, Timarpur, Delhi-110054 (INDIA).

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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Attitude has been a core issue of study in social psychology since its inception. Attitude is generally used to explain our feelings, thoughts and behaviours for other people, issues, events, situations, etc. In our everyday life also, attitude has been one of the most used word. Often we say that:

“I do/don’t like Rohan.”

“I have positive or negative feelings and ideas about dogs as a pet.”

“Anand, as a colleague, has an attitude problem.”

“I favour capital punishment for the sexual offences.”

“I favour atomic non-proliferation at the global level.”

All these statements refer to some or other aspects of attitude. In this unit we will understand the meaning and definition of attitude. We will further explain the components, types and functions of attitude. We will also describe the process and theories of attitude formation and change. We will also discuss the issue pertaining to relationship between attitude and behaviour. Lastly, we will also understand the concept, process and relevance of persuasion.

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## 4.2 MEANING AND DEFINITION OF ATTITUDE

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Although attitude is a common term which is very frequently used in our daily conversations, social psychologists define attitudes in a specific way. One of the pioneers of the field, Gordon Allport (1935) defined attitude as “*mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related.*” There have been a number of attempts to define attitude in different expressions by different social psychologists, however the definition given by Allport has been still regarded as a comprehensive definition of attitude. The definition describes three different aspects of attitudes.

Firstly, Allport refers attitudes as *mental and neural states of readiness*. This assumption implicitly asserts that attitudes are entirely personal affair and cannot be observed or measured directly by other people. Only the person who holds an attitude has access to it. Social psychological tools that claim to measure attitudes are in fact indirect measures of attitudes.

Secondly, the definition states that attitudes are acquired and *organised through experience*. This indicates that the genesis of the attitudes we form about various people, issues, events and situations lies in the experiences that we have in our families, neighbourhood, peer groups, work place and larger society. However, this assumption overemphasises the importance of social learning in attitude formation and underestimates the role of genetic factors in this process.

Finally, the definition states that attitude *exerts a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related*. Thus, attitudes are not merely feelings or beliefs that we have regarding people, issues, events and situations but they also guide and predict our future responses to those people, issues, events and situations.

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### 4.3 STRUCTURE OF ATTITUDE

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An attitude is comprised of three interrelated components:

**Cognitive component** of the attitude refers to the beliefs and thought processes associated with the attitude object. The cognitive component of the attitude further guides the way in which we process information regarding the attitude object. At the initial stage of attitude formation we usually weigh the pros and cons of the attributes of the attitude object and based on these ‘factual’ evaluations we form either a favourable or unfavourable attitude for the object. Furthermore, once an attitude is formed it steers the way we encode, register and utilise the information received from the environment.

**Affective component** indicates that every attitude is associated with positive or negative feelings towards the attitude object. This affective feeling further leads to pleasant or unpleasant emotional responses to the attitude object. Thus liking or disliking for the attitude object originates.

**Behavioural component** indicates that a specific attitude toward an object leads us to a specific behavioural tendency or readiness and thus we are inclined to respond to the attitude object in particular manner consistent with the attitude.

Although these three components are distinct processes, they function in an integrated and interrelated fashion to express the attitude. Since they all belong to the same attitude, they function in a consistent manner. If a person has a negative attitude toward polythene bags he or she will search for information supporting his view that polythene bags are dangerous to the environment. He/she will dislike the consumer goods that are packaged in the polythene bags. Furthermore, he/she himself/herself will not use polythene bags. In this way the attitude structure remains consistent. Each of these components influences the other two and therefore, changes in one component attitude leads to the changes in other components. This process makes the attitude itself dynamic.

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### 4.4 TYPES OF ATTITUDE

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Generally we express our attitudes as per our wish. We are aware of our attitudes and their influences on our behaviour. Such attitudes are known as **explicit attitude**. Since the explicit attitudes function on the conscious level, we are aware of their cognitive processing and their impact on our behaviour. Explicit attitudes are activated by control process of evaluation and execution. For example, we may be aware of our view and feelings towards a particular brand of toothpaste and accordingly this leads us to a specific behaviour toward that (buying or not buying toothpaste of that brand).

However, there are many other attitudes that function at the unconscious level. These attitudes are called as **implicit attitude**. Contrary to the explicit attitudes, implicit attitudes are under control of automatically activated evaluation and are executed in behaviour without the awareness of the person holding that attitude. Thus, implicit attitudes automatically affect behaviours, without conscious thought and below the level of awareness.

It is assumed that in the process of developing new attitudes people usually erase and overwrite the old attitudes with the new ones. However, a model of dual attitudes proposed by Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler (2000) states that when a new attitude is developed; it does not erase the old one. Instead, the two attitudes coexist. The new attitude becomes the explicit attitude; whereas, the old attitudes are still in memory and function as the implicit attitude. Petty, Tormala, Brinol, and Jarvis (2006) demonstrated that in many situations, when the old attitude finds a right situation or are ‘primed’ by the situation, the ‘subconscious’ level implicit attitudes are expressed in the behaviour.

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## 4.5 FUNCTIONS OF ATTITUDE

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Attitudes are formed through learning and are retained even for a lifetime. They, in many cases, become part of the core of our self. They serve a number of functions for the individual (Katz, 1960).

**Adaptive and Instrumental Function:** Favourable attitudes are developed toward rewarding objects and unfavourable attitudes toward objects that thwart or punish us. In this process people learn socially acceptable views, opinions and attitudes. Thus, after being developed, attitudes provide us a simple and efficient means of evaluating objects. A student learns to express positive attitude toward the school discipline when he/she is rewarded for doing so and is punished for not behaving accordingly.

**Knowledge Function:** Attitudes function as simplified categories for various social stimuli (people, events, situations, etc.) which further help us to understand and explain the complex social world. Our attitudes about the object category provide us with a meaning to the social world and a foundation for making inferences about its members. Our stereotypical beliefs and strong prejudices toward a particular racial group are example of such functions of attitudes. Such schematic functions of attitudes further allow us to predict the behaviours of people of these categories with less cognitive efforts.

**Self-expressive Function:** Attitudes are means to define, maintain and enhance the self-worth. Many attitudes express the basic values of the attitude holder and reinforce his or her self-image. Some attitudes represent a person's identification with a particular group. This function of attitudes operates at two levels. Firstly, our core values are reflected in the attitudes we hold and we express our attitudes in our behaviours in the social world. Furthermore, we tend to develop an attitude consistent with our self concept.

**Ego-defensive Function:** The ego-defensive function of attitudes refers that we hold attitudes that protect our self-esteem from harm or justify our acts that make us feel guilty. This function involves psychoanalytic principles where people use defense mechanisms, such as, denial, repression, projection, rationalisation etc., to protect themselves from psychological harm. For example, a player may protect his ego being hurt by his defeat in an interschool badminton match by developing negative attitude toward match referee.

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## 4.6 ATTITUDE FORMATION

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Formation of attitudes is an essential part of the process of our socialisation. We form attitudes of various nature and valence about different entities of our social world. These attitudes further steer our behaviour in specific way in different social situations. Social psychologists have very intensively explored the process by which these attitudes are formed. Central to this course of attitude formation is the process of social learning. We learn these attitudes either through direct experience or through by observing others' 'right' or 'wrong' attitudes. A number of processes by which we acquire or form our attitudes are summarised below.

### 4.6.1 Mere Exposure

Zajonc (1968) proposed that being merely exposed to an object, including foods, photographs, words, advertising slogans, etc., may increase positive feelings towards that object. In a study by Zajonc (1968), participants were repeatedly exposed to nonsense syllables and to Chinese characters and repeated exposure led to increase in positive evaluations of both the nonsense syllables and the Chinese characters.



Generally, this means that familiarity, in fact, may not breed contempt. Familiar faces, ideas and slogans become comfortable old friends. This mechanism is explicitly evident in the advertisement slogans. Repeated exposure to these slogans leads us to like the advertised item. This liking is further translated into buying behaviour. However, studies have shown that the mere exposure effect is most powerful when it occurs randomly over time and too many exposures actually may decrease the effect (Bornstein, 1989). Bornstein (1989) further argued that repeated exposure increases liking when the stimuli are initially neutral or positive. Whereas, repeated exposure to initially negative stimuli may increase the negative emotion.

#### 4.6.2 Personal Experience

Another prominent form of acquiring attitudes is direct personal experience. One strong direct personal experience can build a very strong attitude or can change a strong attitude into the opposite direction. For example, atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II must have formed very strong negative attitude towards atomic weapons. Attitudes acquired through direct experience are likely to be strongly held and to affect behaviour. People are also more likely to search for information to support such attitudes and, therefore, such attitudes are less susceptible to change.

#### 4.6.3 Classical Conditioning

Most of attitudes we learn through the process of socialisation. Classical conditioning as a basic mechanism of learning, as proposed by Pavlov (1927), presumes that when a neutral stimulus (*conditioned stimulus, CS*) is repeatedly paired with a natural stimulus (*unconditioned stimulus, UCS*), neutral stimulus alone acquires the ability to elicit the response (*conditioned response, CR*) which naturally occurs (*unconditioned response, UCR*) after natural stimulus. Pavlov undertook an experiment that showed that dogs could learn to salivate in response to other stimuli, such as the sound of a bell, if these stimuli were repeatedly associated with feeding. This mechanism is overly utilised by the advertisers and opinion building agents.

Watson, pioneer of behaviourism, demonstrated that how a negative response (fear) could be acquired through classical conditioning. Watson and Rayner (1920) conditioned an 11 month old boy, 'Little Albert', to develop a fear response to a white rat. Initially, the boy did not show any fear of the rat. In the process of conditioning, as the boy approached the rat, the researchers made a loud (unpleasant and aversive) sound just behind the boy's head. After repeated pairings of the loud sound and the presence of the rat, Little Albert acquired a conditioned response and learned to display negative emotion (fear) to the rat alone.

Not only such negative emotions, but positive emotions and likings can also be developed through this process. Advertisers repeatedly present their brands associated with those celebrities who are thought to induce positive emotion among the target audience. Assumptions of classical conditioning suggest that this leads to liking of that brand which was initially neutral and was consistently paired with a positive stimulus. Many researchers have further demonstrated that attitudes can be formed through the mechanism of classical conditioning even by the exposure to the stimuli that are below the threshold of individual's conscious awareness, known as subliminal conditioning (Krosnick, Betz, Jussim, & Lynn, 1992).

#### 4.6.4 Operant Conditioning

Principles of classical conditioning are helpful in explaining the development of simple reflexive responses, such as reflexive salivation in dogs in response to the stimuli

associated with food or the negative emotional responses (fear) to stimuli that have been paired with unpleasant or aversive sound. However, classical conditioning does not account for more complex behaviours, such as attitudes. The behavioural psychologist B. F. Skinner (1938) called these types of complex behaviours as operant responses because they operate on the environment to produce effects or consequences. In operant conditioning, responses are acquired and strengthened by their consequences. In the other words, mechanism of operant conditioning assumes that the behaviours that follow positive consequences are strengthened and their likelihood is increased. Whereas, the behaviours that follow negative consequences are weakened and their likelihood is decreased.

In the process of socialisation, parents give rewards to their children in the form of verbal praise or candies when they express right views. Similarly, children receive punishments, as well, when they show wrong attitudes. Our parents, basic family, peers, school, workplace colleagues, etc. are those people and institutions whose even soft rewards (praise) and punishments (scolding or neglect) matter a lot to us. When we become members of these groups we learn to express attitudes similar to those held by them in order to maximise our rewards and minimise punishments from them. Most of our basic religious and political attitudes are formed in this way. When we become member of a new social network many a times our old attitudes do not correspond to the attitudes of the new group. Therefore, in order to fulfil the desire to fit in with others in the new group and get reward for holding the same attitudes we tend to change the old attitude and form the new attitude similar to the newly joined group (Levitan & Visser, 2008).

#### **4.6.5 Observational Learning**

In the complex social world we often form attitudes in the absence of direct rewards and punishments. Many times we observe our parents or peers expressing a particular attitude toward some ethnic group, people, social issue, etc. and acquire those attitudes by simply observing those attitudes and behaviours. This process is called as observational learning or modelling in which we acquire behaviours by observing or imitating others' behaviours in a particular context (Bandura, 1997).

The mechanism of social comparison explains the process of attitude formation through observational learning (Festinger, 1954). In fact social realities are not dichotomous in the way that we can say that this attitude is right, or that view is wrong. Therefore, in order to decide that whether our attitudes are right or wrong we compare our views and attitudes with those of others. Once we find that our attitudes are similar to those held by others, we assume that we are holding a right attitude. Otherwise, we tend to modify our attitude corresponding to others'.

However, we do not compare our attitudes to any group arbitrarily; rather we compare our views only with those people we identify ourselves with. Thus, these groups are reference groups for us and we compare our views and attitudes only with them. This process suggests that we form our attitudes in order to fulfil our desire to be similar to those we like and to differ from those we do not. Having disagreement with those we like is uncomfortable and, therefore, we tend to adhere to the attitudes of the liked or reference group to avoid this un-comfort caused by disagreement (Turner, 1991).

#### **4.6.6 Genetic Factors**

Some of the recent studies have furthered the view that strong attitudes, likes and dislikes, have their genesis in our genetic constitute (Tesser, 1993). Tesser (1993) has presented some empirical evidences showing that there was more similarity of attitudes

among identical twins than those of fraternal twins. Tesser (1993) further found that the twins reared apart and those who were reared in the same home did not differ in their attitudes. These findings led Tesser to suggest that certain attitudes are predisposed and rooted in our genetic makeup. He contemplated that such predispositions originate from our inborn physical, sensory and cognitive skills, as well as from our temperament and personality traits.

### Self Assessment Questions 1

Fill in the following blanks:

- 1) Principles of classical conditioning are helpful in explaining the development of ..... responses.
- 2) We usually learn attitudes either through ..... or .....
- 3) The attitudes that function at the unconscious level are called as .....
- 4) Allport (1935) defined attitude as “.....  
.....  
.....”
- 5) The process of acquiring attitudes by simply observing attitudes and behaviours is called as .....

## 4.7 ATTITUDE CHANGE

In any democratic country, like India, elections are conducted to decide that which political party will form the government for the next years. However, it often happens that the incumbent political party loses the confidence of voters and the other party wins the majority of voters' opinions. Thus, attitudes once formed can be changed also. For example, a person who has positive attitude toward atomic weapons may begin opposing it, or *vice versa*. Attitude change is a process by which valence of attitude is transformed or changed into the opposite direction. This process is illustrated in figure given below.

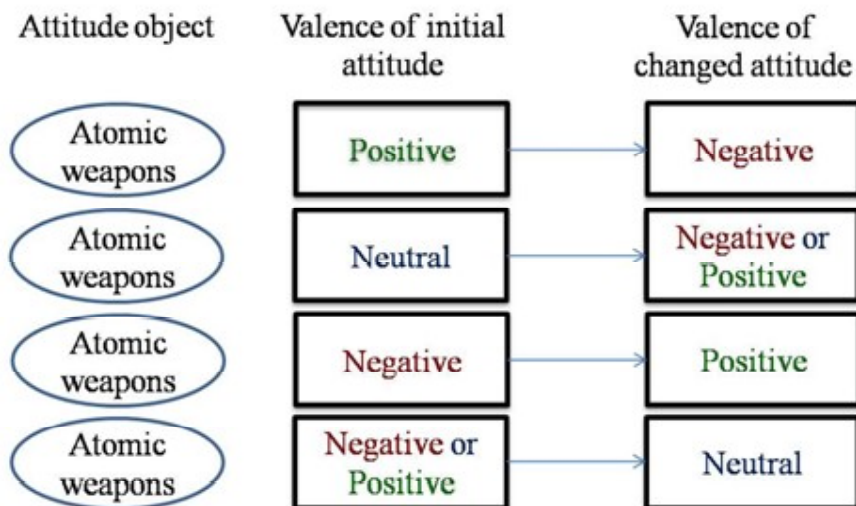


Fig. 4.1: Example to show valence and attitude

Social psychologists propose two different approaches to explain this process. Both the approaches differ in terms of source of attitude change. One approach assumes that the genesis of the process of attitude change is internal (cognitive consistency approach). However, the other approach emphasises on the external sources of attitude change (persuasion).

### 4.7.1 Balance Theory

Fritz Heider (1946) proposed balance theory which views the situations in a triad containing three components; P: the person, O: the other person, and X: the attitude object. Heider hypothesises two types of relationships among elements: sentiment and unit. Sentiment relationships are characterised by bonds based on attitudes or evaluations, for example Rohan likes coffee; Sandhya supports moves for cashless economy; Nitesh cheers Mumabi Indians in the IPL. Unit relationships indicate possession, for example Ritesh works with Omkar; Gagan has prepared a proposal for cashless economy; Mukesh owns the Mumabi Indians in the IPL). Relationships among the elements are indicated by positive (+) or negative (-) signs. Heider proposed that individuals view such relationships either as balanced (consistent) or unbalanced (inconsistent). For example, the principle that “my enemy’s enemy is my friend” is balanced, because there is something consistent about liking the person who has attacked your enemy. Balance in a triad is concluded by multiplying the signs together. If the outcome is positive, the cognitive structure is balanced (consistent) and if the outcome is negative, it is unbalanced (see the figure below).

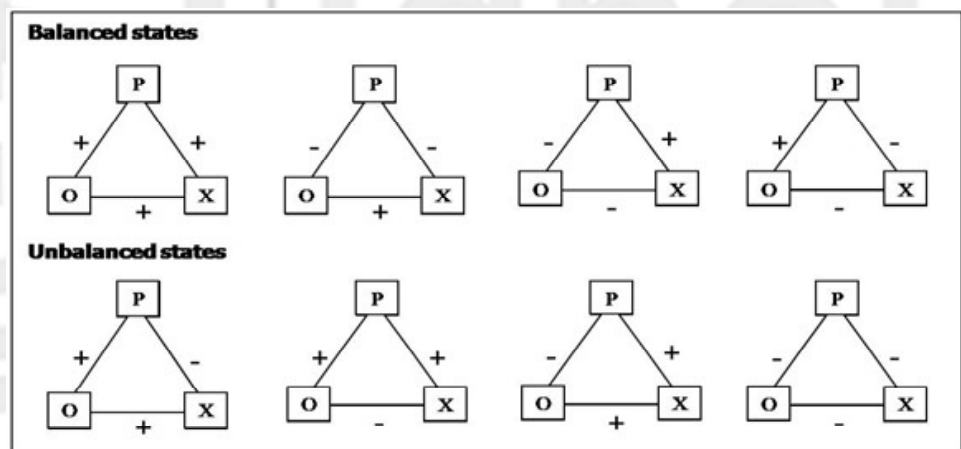


Fig. 4.2: Balance Theory

Balance theory proposes that since balanced states are favoured over unbalanced states, people are motivated to change an unbalanced state to a balanced state. Heider argued that by this way people restore consistency in the relationships. Heider (1958) demonstrated this in a study where participants were exposed to the triads showing that “Jim doesn’t like Bob, but he likes the poem that Bob wrote”. Responding to the situation, about 80% of participants felt the requirement of some change in the relationships. Majority of participants suggested Jim to change the sentiment relationship with Bob. About one third participants suggested Jim to change attitude toward the poem. About 5% suggested a change in the unit relationship between Bob and the poem stating that the poem was actually not written by Bob.

Though Heider’s balance theory may appear reasonable to explain the relationships, it does not explain more complex situations. Balance theory takes the relationship among the elements of the triad into account but it does not talk about magnitude of these relationships. Simple disliking and enmity both have negative sign but their magnitudes

are not comparable. Balance theory explains the situations involving only three elements, but the real social situations are far more complex having more than three elements. Even though balance theory has been criticised on these points, it has been applied to several areas, such as developing friendship, conformity and reactions to criticism.

### 4.7.2 Cognitive Dissonance Theory

In our everyday life there are number of occasions where we show incompatible attitudes, beliefs or behaviours. For example, many people smoke (behaviour) even when they know that smoking can increase the risks of cancer (cognition). This incongruity creates a psychological state of discomfort leading to probable modification in one of the attitudes, beliefs or behaviours so that the discomfort is reduce and balance is reinstated. Cognitive dissonance, as proposed by Festinger's (1957), suggests that a psychological force (an inner drive) functions to maintain all our attitudes and beliefs in synchronisation and avoids dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance theory assumes that in our daily social life whenever we notice incoherence among our thoughts, attitudes and actions, an automated response of psychological distress is generated. Although the degree of dissonance may vary according to the relevance and importance of opinions, attitudes and actions and corresponding to the degree of incongruence between belief and behaviour, we are strongly tend to resolve the dissonance and furthermore, the greater the dissonance the more you will be motivated to resolve it. It is argued that dissonance is resolved in any of three basic ways:

- **Change beliefs:** Dissonance between actions and beliefs may very fundamentally be resolved by changing the beliefs. However, changing belief is unlikely if the opinion is deep-seated and central to the individual's belief system. Moreover, our basic beliefs and attitudes are relatively stable and people generally hesitate in changing their basic beliefs, attitudes or opinions. Therefore, people generally do not employ this simplest way of resolving dissonance.

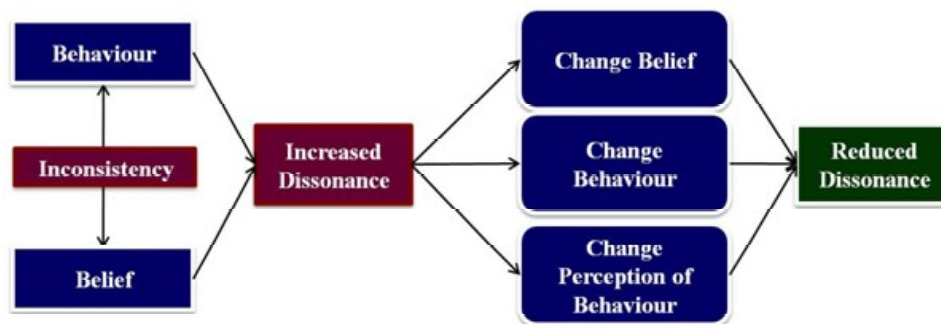


Fig. 4.3: Cognitive Dissonance Theory

- **Change behaviour:** At many occasions this dissonance may be resolved by simply changing the behaviour in question. A person who smokes even after knowing that smoking can cause cancer may eventually stop smoking and thus reduce the dissonance caused by the inconsistency between belief and behaviour.
- **Change perception of behaviour:** We can resolve the dissonance with the help of an even more complex mode by changing the way we perceive your action. In the other words, we may rationalise our actions. A person who smokes even after knowing that smoking can cause cancer may continue to smoke with the reasoning that he smokes to avoid the stresses of daily routine or he smokes only with his friends. In other words, people start thinking about their action in a different manner or context so that it no longer appears to be inconsistent with the actions.

The cognitive dissonance theory has been very extensively researched and applied in number of significant social behaviours; such as forced compliance behaviour, decision making and effort justification.

#### 4.7.2.1 Forced Compliance Behaviour

There are number of situations in our social life when we are forced (many times under pressure of social norms, etiquettes or obligations) to behave publicly in a way that is inconsistent with our personally or privately held belief. For example, we are forced to praise a horrible singing of a close friend. Such forced compliance behaviours lead to dissonance between cognition (belief) and behaviour (action). Since the action inconsistent to the belief has already been taken, dissonance can be reduced only by modifying the attitude.

Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) conducted an experiment to test this hypothesis. In the experiment, after performing a presumably uninteresting task of turning pegs in a peg board for an hour research participants were requested to report the task as interesting to other fellow participants who were waiting for their turn. They were paid either \$20 or \$1 for doing this. The researchers reported that regardless of what amount they were paid, most of the participants told the waiting participants that the experimental task was very interesting. Lastly, on being asked to rate that how interesting the experiment was, the participants who were paid \$1 reported the monotonous task as more interesting than those who were paid \$20.

The results led the researchers to conclude that an incentive of \$1 was sufficient for showing behaviour inconsistent with the belief which led the participants who were paid \$1 to experience greater dissonance. Consequently, this dissonance was resolved by modifying the belief that the tasks were interesting and enjoyable. However, a payment of \$20 provided a significant reason for believing task as really enjoyable and therefore, no or little dissonance was created in such participants.

#### 4.7.2.2 Decision Making and Cognitive Dissonance

We encounter with many dilemmatic situations in which taking a decision may induce dissonance. For example, getting married or going for a career is such a great dilemmatic situation in which decision making becomes so difficult for a girl reared in a typical Indian social setup. In such dilemmatic situations both the alternatives have their own advantages and disadvantages and going along one alternative closes the possibility of availing the advantages of the alternative that was rejected. Either way, regardless of which of the two alternatives is selected, advantages of the rejected alternative arouse dissonance.

Brehm (1956), based on his study, proposed that dissonance in such conditions can be reduced if the person in dissonance enhances the attractiveness of the alternative he or she has chosen and simultaneously by attaching less attraction or advantages to the rejected option. Brehm (1956) referred it as '*spreading apart the alternatives*'.

#### 4.7.2.3 Effort Justification

It seems logical to construe that people attach more value to those goals that are achieved after great efforts. Aronson and Mills (1959) argued that when we achieve a trivial goal even after investing substantial effort it produces considerable dissonance. Such dissonance may be reduced by assuming that the effort or time invested in achieving the goal was not that big. However, such assumption is unrealistic and hence difficult to reduce dissonance by this way. Therefore, people tend to justify their efforts by appraising

the achieved goal in a more positive way and by attaching more subjective value to those goals, consequently leading to the reduced dissonance.

### 4.7.3 Persuasion

Whenever we switch on our television sets we are exposed to numerous advertisements that suggest buying different kinds of products, ranging from apparels to sun glasses, chocolates to toothpastes, tour packages to electronic gadgets, etc. There are ample research evidences indicating substantial influence of such advertisements on our buying behaviour. These advertisements actually change our attitudes towards certain products and brands. Persuasion refers to changing attitudes by such external communication either in person or through mass media, either in text or through multi media.

#### 4.7.3.1 Dual Process Model of Persuasion

Some of the persuasive messages and persuaders are more effective than others. Similarly, some people are more readily persuaded than others. Two seemingly different models, the *elaboration-likelihood model* (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and the *heuristic-systematic model* (Chaiken, 1980), attempt to explain this process. Despite of minute dissimilarities, both models propose that an effective persuasive communication follows a dual process and takes the message through two different routes. Each of these processes differs from the other in terms of amount of cognitive effort or elaboration they require (central/systematic route and peripheral/heuristic route).

The persuasive communication takes the central/systematic route, high elaboration conditions, when the target person is willing and has high processing capacity to process the content of the message. In contrast, when the target person is less motivated and has low processing capacity to process the content of the message the peripheral/heuristic route is taken. In such low elaboration conditions, the cues irrelevant to the content or quality of the message are paid greater attention (refer the figure given below). Although both routes are capable of changing attitudes, attitudes resulting from the peripheral route are feeble, less resistant to counter persuasion and weaker in predicting the behaviour than those resulting from central route attitudes (Petty, Haugtvedt, & Smith, 1995).

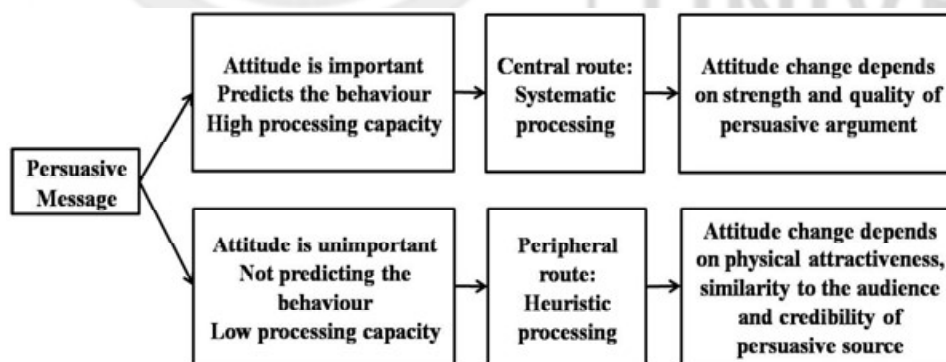


Fig. 4.4: Dual Process Model of Persuasion

When a persuasive message is processed a number of factors determine the route it will take. When the persuader speaks very fast, deep and systematic processing of the message becomes difficult and therefore, peripheral route is preferred over the central route. Mood of the target of the message also play important role in deciding that which of the two routes is taken. An unhappy target, negative mood, generally scans his/her environment for threats and problems leading to very systematically process the information and therefore, in such conditions central route is preferred. In contrast,

happy people use the peripheral route and therefore they are more susceptible to weak cues like source attractiveness. Furthermore, when the attitude is more important to the target and has direct impact on him/her, the message is processed systematically through the central route. Whereas, persuasive attempts pertaining to the less important attitudes are processed through peripheral route. Some individual qualities, such as need for cognition, need for closure, need to evaluate and self-monitoring also determine the route of persuasive message. People high on these dimensions prefer to process persuasive messages via central route.

At the outset, if the persuasive communication takes the central route the effectiveness of the persuasive attempt is majorly affected by the strength and quality of the argument furthered by the persuader. If content of the persuasive argument is strong and rich in quality the persuasive attempt is successful. However, in case of peripheral route several properties of the source of the message become critical to its effectiveness. Primarily, persuasive attempt is successful when the source of the message is physically attractive, similar (in terms of shared attitudes, appearance, or social categories) to the audience and has credibility in the issues pertaining to the particular attitude.

#### 4.7.3.2 Factors Affecting Persuasion

A persuasive process has four different components: the source, the message, the channel and the audience. Various properties of these components determine whether the persuasive attempt will be successful or not.

- **The Source**

The foremost important factor in effectiveness of persuasion is the communicator. Often we see that similar arguments presented by different people have varying impacts on the audience. **Credible sources** are more persuasive than those who are low on the dimension of credibility. Credibility of the source increases with our perception of the communicator as an expert of the field and his or her trustworthiness. Hovland and Weiss (1951) initially took ratings of attitudes of research participants towards nuclear submarines. One week later all the research participants were asked to read an identical message regarding nuclear submarines. However, one group of participants were told that the source of the message was the famous scientist Robert J. Oppenheimer, presumably a high credible source. On the other hand, remaining participants were told that the source of the message was *Pravda*, the newspaper of the Communist Party of the then Soviet Union. Researchers arguably presumed that this source would be a low credibility source for the participants belonging to the United States. Immediately after reading the message ratings of attitudes of research participants towards nuclear submarines was taken again. Results indicated greater attitude change in those receiving message from a presumably credible source than those who received message from a low credible source.

Persuaders who are **attractive and high on likeability** are more successful in changing the attitudes of their audience. The reason behind hiring attractive models to appear in advertisements and to promote sell is the basic principle that we like those attractive models and therefore, agree to buy the product. Some researchers have argued that people speaking rapidly persuade more effectively than those who speak slowly. Presumably, people speaking rapidly present an impression that they have expertise and know everything of what they are talking about (Miller, Maruyama, Beaver & Valone, 1976).

- **The Message**

Emotion embedded in the content of the message is also an important factor in



determining the effectiveness of persuasion. **Good feelings** either induced by the message or otherwise present in the environment, when persuasion is attempted, enhance persuasion. Dabbs and Janis (1965) reported that students participating in the experiment were more influenced by the persuasion when they were enjoying peanuts and Pepsi while reading the message. In fact, when the audience is in positive mood the message is processed through the peripheral route and therefore, the content of the message is ignored resulting into more impulsive decisions.

Messages suggesting to give up smoking, to avoid unsafe sexual behaviours, to not drink and drive, etc. generally use **fear arousing communication**. These messages very vividly explain the negative consequences of getting involved in these activities. Janis and Feshbach (1953) reported that the message is most persuasive when it induces mild fear in the audience. They argued that very high fear inducing messages legitimately threatens the audience which leads to strong counter arguments and denial in the audience.

Some messages are designed in such a way that they present opposing arguments. Contrarily, other messages are designed in such a way that they present only one sided argument. Studies indicate that two sided messages are more effective in persuasion as compared to one sided messages. Walster and Festinger (1962) argued that the **two sided messages** do not appear to be deliberately framed to change the attitude and therefore, such persuasive attempts face least resistance from the audience. On the other hand, one sided messages seem to be deliberately framed to change the attitude and therefore, audience to such messages show enhanced resistance leading to less effective persuasion.

- ***The Channel***

Some persuasive attempts merely present the verbal messages to the audience. On the other hand, persuasive messages may also be presented to the audience in an **interactive and experiential manner**. Studies indicate that although the mere reception of the message may lead to substantial degree of persuasion, the extent of persuasion decreases as the significance and relevance of the issue increases. When the issue is more relevant and important to the audience interactive and experiential way of persuasion is more successful.

Several studies have indicated that **messages conveyed to the audience personally** are more successful in persuasion than those given through media. In a study, Eldersveld and Dodge (1954) demonstrated the effectiveness of personal face-to-face persuasion as compared to other methods in political voting behaviour. The researchers divided the voters into three groups. The first group was exposed only to the mass media (a control group). 19% voters of the group voted for the change. The second group received four personal mails suggesting voting for change. 45 per cent of the voters of this voted for change. Voters of the third group were visited personally and were exposed to a direct face-to-face appeal to vote for change. Results indicated that 75 per cent voters of the third group voted for the change.

- ***The Audience***

People vary in their susceptibility to persuasion. Some people are easy to persuade, while others show great resistance to the persuasion efforts. Janis (1954) has argued that the people who have low self esteem are more easily persuaded than those having high self esteem. Studies have shown that when audience are obstructed from paying attention to the message they become more susceptible to persuasion (Allyn & Festinger, 1961). Furthermore, people in formational age, adolescents and early adults, are more susceptible to persuasion as compared to the older audience (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989).

### 4.7.3.3 Resistance to Persuasion

Although at many occasions persuasion becomes successful in changing our attitudes, it is not always the case. Many people are indeed very difficult audience and they very strongly resist the attempts of persuasion. Numbers of factors determine the extent to which an audience can resist an effort of persuasion.

- ***Reactance***

All of us have a strong need of personal freedom to take a position or to have a view on various issues. When a skilled persuader exerts pressure on us to change our views or attitudes it threatens our freedom leading to increased level of annoyance. Consequently, we not only resist the attempts of persuasion many times we form a strong attitude opposite to the direction desired by the persuader (Brehm, 1966). When an individual views a persuasive attempt as a direct threat to his or her image as an independent person, this tendency of reactance becomes stronger and the individual is strongly motivated to protect his or her attitude from persuasion. Studies have indicated that in situations when reactance is activated moderate or weak arguments are more successful in persuasion as compared to the stronger ones.

- ***Forewarning***

There are number of situations where before being exposed to the persuasive message we know in advance that the message has been intentionally designed to change our attitude. For example, whenever we switch on our television sets we know that the advertisements aired during the commercial breaks are intentionally designed to enhance the possibility of buying the product by the viewers. Similarly, when we listen to the speakers in a political campaign we know that the speakers would argue for voting for particular political party. Studies have been reported indicating that when the audience knows that a message is intentionally designed to change the attitudes, known as forewarning, the individual is less susceptible to the persuasive message (Johnson, 1994). When we know about the intention of the message in advance we have enough time to formulate arguments to guard our attitude from the persuasive message. Therefore, in such situations we are cognitively better armed to protect our views.

- ***Selective Exposure***

Once attitudes are formed they become part of our self and therefore, we have a strong tendency to protect them. We generally attend the information that are consistent to our existing attitudes and purposefully avoid the information that challenges our views. While watching television we change the channel during commercial breaks to avoid any impact of persuasive attempts. Such selective exposure and avoiding the information contradictory to our views ensure that our attitudes are intact and persist for a longer time.

- ***Counterarguments***

Studies suggest that when we actively argue against the persuasive message inconsistent to our attitude our susceptibility to the persuasion is weakened (Eagly, Chen, Chaiken, & Shaw-Barnes, 1999). This is particularly true for the attitudes which were initially formed on the basis of strong reasoning and extensive arguments. When we argue against the message contrary to our attitude it further provides reasons for holding the attitudes resulting into strengthening of the existing attitude.

## Self Assessment Questions 2

State whether the following are 'True' or 'False':

- 1) Emotion embedded in the content of the message is not an important factor in determining the effectiveness of persuasion. ( )
- 2) If content of the persuasive argument is strong and rich in quality, then the persuasive attempt is successful. ( )
- 3) Chaiken proposed balance theory in 1946. ( )
- 4) Dissonance between actions and beliefs may very fundamentally be resolved by changing the beliefs. ( )
- 5) Attitude change is a process by which valence of attitude is kept constant in the same direction. ( )

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## 4.8 LET US SUM UP

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It can therefore be concluded from the above discussion that, attitude is generally used to explain our feelings, thoughts and behaviours for other people, issues, events and situations in our social environment. Attitudes that operate on conscious level are known as explicit attitude, we are aware of their cognitive processing and their impact on our behaviour. On the other hand, implicit attitudes operate at unconscious level under control of automatically activated evaluation and are executed in behaviour without conscious awareness of the person holding that attitude. People form attitudes either through direct experience or by observing others' attitudes. Some of the studies have considered genetic influence also in attitude formation. Attitudes once formed can be changed also. Attitude change is a process by which valence of attitude is transformed or changed into the opposite direction. Various theories and approaches have attempted to explain the process of attitude change; such as balance theory, cognitive dissonance theory and persuasion.

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## 4.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

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- 1) Define attitudes and explain its structure. Describe the types of attitude and also discuss the functions it serves for human being.
- 2) Elucidate various processes of attitude formation.
- 3) What is attitude change? Discuss balance theory of attitude change.
- 4) Critically evaluate cognitive dissonance theory and discuss its significance in different social behaviours.
- 5) Explain the process of persuasion. Discuss the factors affecting persuasion and also explicate the situations in which persuasive attempts are resisted.

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## 4.10 GLOSSARY

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<b>Attitude</b>	: Feelings, thoughts and behaviours for other people, issues, events, situations, etc.
<b>Implicit attitudes</b>	: Operate at conscious level and the person holding the attitude is aware of its cognitive processing and impact on behaviour.

**Individual Level Processes**

- Implicit attitudes** : Operate at unconscious level under control of automatically activated evaluation and are executed in behaviour without awareness.
- Knowledge function** : Refers to a function of attitudes to categorise various social stimuli (people, events, situations, etc.) to understand and explain the complex social world.
- Self-expressive function** : Refers to attitude's function to define, maintain and enhance the self-worth.
- Ego-defensive function** : We hold attitudes that protect our self-esteem from harm or justify our acts that make us feel guilty.
- Classical conditioning** : A learning theory proposing that a neutral stimulus (conditioned stimulus, CS) paired with a natural stimulus (unconditioned stimulus, UCS), neutral stimulus alone acquires the ability to elicit the response (conditioned response, CR) which naturally occurs (unconditioned response, UCR) after natural stimulus.
- Operant conditioning** : A mechanism of learning assuming that the behaviours that follow positive consequences are strengthened and their likelihood is increased. Whereas, the behaviours that follow negative consequences weakened and their likelihood is decreased.
- Observational learning** : A mechanism of learning in which we acquire behaviours by observing or imitating others' behaviours in a particular context.
- Attitude change** : A process by which the valence of attitude is transformed or changed into the opposite direction.
- Balance theory** : Views the situations in a triad containing three components; the person, the other person and the attitude object and proposes that since balanced states among these components are favoured over unbalanced states, people are motivated to change an unbalanced state to a balanced state.
- Cognitive dissonance** : Incompatible attitudes, beliefs or behaviours create a psychological state of discomfort leading to modification in one of the attitudes, beliefs or behaviours so that the discomfort is reduce and balance is reinstated.
- Forced compliance behaviour** : Situations in our social life when we are forced (many times under pressure of social norms, etiquettes or obligations) to behave publicly in a way that is inconsistent with our belief that we personally or privately have.

- Effort justification** : Tendency to justify efforts by appraising the achieved goal in a more positive way and by attaching more subjective value to those goals, consequently leading to the reduced dissonance.
- Persuasion** : Refers to the process of changing attitudes by external communication either in person or through mass media, either in text or through multi media.
- Elaboration-likelihood model** : When the target person is willing and has high processing capacity to process the content of the message, the persuasive communication takes the central/systematic route and the cues relevant to the content or quality of the message are paid greater attention.
- Heuristic-systematic model** : When the target person is less motivated and has low processing capacity to process the content of the persuasive communication takes the peripheral/heuristic route and the cues irrelevant to the content or quality of the message are paid greater attention.
- Resistance to persuasion** : A situation when the audience strongly resist the attempts of persuasion.
- Reactance** : A feeling of direct threat to one's image as an independent person leading the individual to strongly protect his or her attitude from persuasion.
- Forewarning** : A situation when people are aware about the intention of the message in advance provides enough time to formulate arguments to guard our attitude from the persuasive message.
- Selective exposure** : Tendency to avoid information contradictory to one's views ensuring that the attitudes are intact and persist for a longer time.
- Counterarguments** : Actively arguing against the persuasive message inconsistent to one's attitude results into weakening of susceptibility to the persuasion and strengthening of the existing attitude.

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## **4.11 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

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### **Self Assessment Questions 1**

- 1) simple reflexive
- 2) direct experience or through by observing others' 'right' or 'wrong' attitudes.
- 3) implicit attitude

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

### Self Assessment Questions 2

- 1) False
- 2) True
- 3) False
- 4) True
- 5) False

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## UNIT 5 ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR\*

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### Structure

#### 5.0 Objectives

#### 5.1 Introduction

#### 5.2 Relationship between Attitude and Behaviour

##### 5.2.1 Attitude Specificity

##### 5.2.2 Attitude Accessibility

##### 5.2.3 Self Awareness

##### 5.2.4 Attitude Certainty

##### 5.2.5 Attitude Strength

#### 5.3 Stereotype, Prejudice and Discrimination

##### 5.3.1 Stereotype

##### 5.3.2 Prejudice

###### 5.3.2.1 Sources of Prejudice

##### 5.3.3 Discrimination

##### 5.3.4 Reducing Stereotype, Prejudice and Discrimination

###### 5.3.4.1 Social Learning Approach

###### 5.3.4.2 Increased Intergroup Contact

###### 5.3.4.3 Recategorisation: Developing Common Social Identity

###### 5.3.4.4 Feeling of Guilt Originated from Prejudice

###### 5.3.4.5 Learning to Negate Stereotypes

###### 5.3.4.6 Social Influence

#### 5.4 Let Us Sum Up

#### 5.5 Unit End Questions

#### 5.6 Answers to Self Assessment Questions

#### 5.7 Glossary

#### 5.8 Suggested Readings and References

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### 5.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the relationship between attitude and behaviour;
- Elucidate the concept of stereotype, prejudice and discrimination;
- Discuss the sources of prejudice; and
- Elaborate upon the ways of reducing stereotype, prejudice and discrimination.

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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By now you must be clear with the concept of attitude and the process of attitude change. You are also aware of the theories related to attitude formation. In the present unit, we will discuss the relationship between attitude and behaviour. We will also understand the concepts of stereotype, prejudice and discrimination. By the end of this unit, you will also come to know about the sources of prejudice and the disguised forms

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\* Dr. Ari Sudan Tiwari, Scientist 'E', Defence Institute of Psychological Research, Ministry of Defence, Lucknow Road, Timarpur, Delhi-110054 (INDIA).

of discrimination. Lastly, you will also be acquainted by the ways of reducing stereotype, prejudice and discrimination.

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## 5.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR

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Do attitudes really guide our behaviour? This has been a long debated issue for social psychologists. In one of the classic study, LaPiere (1934) visited to almost 250 hotels and restaurants of different places of the United States with a Chinese couple to see whether the couple was offered the service or not. After travelling for almost 2 years, he saw that the couple was denied for service by only one hotel and restaurant. However, in reply to a mailed questionnaire 92 per cent of the hotels and restaurants said that they would not offer service to a Chinese couple. This indicated that their behaviour, offering service to the Chinese couple, was inconsistent with their attitude expressed in reply to the questionnaire. Although surprising, the findings of LaPiere's study suggested that attitudes do not always predict behaviour. Rather, there are some factors that affect the relationship between attitude and behaviour.

### 5.2.1 Attitude Specificity

In many cases, our general attitudes fail to predict our specific behaviours. For example, we might, in general, like psychology as a discipline. However, when it comes to social psychology, one of its specific branches, we may not like it. Similarly, in LaPiere's study the attitude reported in the questionnaire was regarding Chinese couple in general; however, the behaviour observed was toward a specific Chinese couple. Furthermore, despite of being prejudiced and having negative attitude toward a particular community in general, one may have friendship with one or more specific members of that community.

### 5.2.2 Attitude Accessibility

Extending availability heuristic to the issue of behaviour-attitude link, it is suggested that the attitude which is more easily accessible more strongly influences the person's behaviour (Fazio, 1995). The concept of automatic behaviour argues that the attitudes which are more readily available activate the behaviour consistent with the attitude by priming.

### 5.2.3 Self Awareness

People may hold two different types of self awareness: private self awareness and public self awareness (Echabe & Garate, 1994). It is suggested that people holding private self awareness act consistent with their own attitude; whereas, people holding public self awareness behave according to the attitude held by the majority of people present in social setting. In the other words, people with public self awareness act under majority pressure, an instance of conformity. For example, a person with private self awareness with positive attitude toward *Swachhh Bharat Abhiyan* will behave according to his or her attitude and consequently would not litter at public places. However, when the person is with his or her friends and the public self awareness of the person is activated, it is more likely that the person would behave consistent with the attitude of majority of the group.

### 5.2.4 Attitude Certainty

Attitude certainty includes two components: *attitude clarity*, the extent to which person is clear about his or her attitude and *attitude correctness*, the extent to which person thinks that his or her attitude is correct, valid and appropriate to hold. Petrocelli, Tormala

and Rucker (2007) have reported that the attitude high on the dimension of certainty is more likely to influence the individual's behaviour and furthermore, less likely to be affected or changed by persuasive messages.

### 5.2.5 Attitude Strength

Link between attitude and behaviour is stronger with stronger attitudes as compared to the weaker attitudes. Strength of a particular attitude is determined by three different factors that further affect the link between attitude and behaviour: processing of information regarding the attitude object, personal involvement or relevance with the issue pertaining to the attitude and direct experience. Liberman and Chaiken (1996) have reported that when information pertaining to the attitude is processed more often, it results into enhanced attitude strength and stronger link between attitude and behaviour. Similarly, attitudes that are more relevant and important to the person and serve some purpose to the person's life are stronger and more capable of predicting behaviour. Finally, the attitudes that are formed through direct experience become stronger and predict behaviour with greater consistency.

#### Self Assessment Question 1

Fill in the following blanks:

- 1) Attitude certainty includes two components ..... and .....
- 2) Fazio (1995) suggested that the..... which is more easily accessible more strongly influences the person's behaviour.
- 3) People may hold two different types of self awareness..... and .....
- 4) Attitudes that are formed through direct experience become stronger and predict ..... with greater consistency.

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## 5.3 STEREOTYPE, PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

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In our everyday social interactions, we often have rigid opinions regarding particular social groups and their members. We also have some negative feelings for them and treat them in a way different from how we treat our own group and its members. In the other words, we have a particular attitude towards these social groups and this particular attitude is expressed in our opinion, feelings and behaviour toward the social group and its members. Almost every region of the world has been facing such problems in the form of ethnic and racial conflicts, gender biases, political/ideological rivalries, etc. Social psychologists have construed such issues as a particular form of attitude and have termed them as stereotype, prejudice and discrimination.

Although the words stereotype, prejudice and discrimination are used in similar ways in general conversations, they are theoretically explained in different ways by social psychologists. Social psychologists argue that stereotype, prejudice and discrimination represent three different components of attitude.

### 5.3.1 Stereotype

Stereotypes are beliefs that some traits and characteristics are shared by the members of a particular social group. Stereotypes function as cognitive framework and influence the way in which information relevant to the stereotype is processed. Gender stereotype

is one of the most prevalent stereotypes across societies. Based on compilation of findings of various studies on gender stereotype, it is concluded that females are stereotypically believed as 'warm and dependent', whereas; males are perceived as 'competent and independent'. Stereotypically associated feminine traits are warm, emotionally sensitive, kind, submissive, oriented to aesthetics, mild, etc. On the other hand, traits like competent, emotionally stable, confident, tough, independent, non-conformist, leader, aggressive, etc. are stereotypically believed as traits possessed by males. Das (2011) has reported that Indian television advertisements have portrayed women mostly as young characters, in relationship or family roles, less frequently as prominent characters, more frequently in advertisements related to female oriented or beauty products, mostly in home settings and not often as professionals.

Similar to the schemas, stereotypes function as cognitive structures that help us in classifying, understanding and retrieving social information. Thus, we classify people based on the group they belong to and in understanding and interpreting their behaviour we utilise the cluster of traits that we stereotypically believe associated with the group. This process significantly minimises our cognitive efforts in social interactions and help us in predicting behaviours of people based on their groups. If we are asked to describe social, cultural, ethnic groups, such as Indians, Pakistanis, Asians, Europeans, Americans, Africans, etc., in terms of the traits that characterise them; most of us would come up with lists of traits even for those groups with whom we have very little interaction or even no interaction at all. These traits are actually stored in the stereotype associated with the particular group and are retrieved when the stereotype is activated. Since stereotypes function as schemas, they facilitate processing of information consistent with them. In the other words, information consistent with the stereotype is encoded, stored and retrieved better than the information that are unrelated to the stereotype which makes the stereotypes difficult to change.

### 5.3.2 Prejudice

Prejudice is defined as a feeling, primarily negative, toward a person exclusively on the basis that the person is member of a particular social group. Thus, a person prejudiced toward a particular social group expresses negative emotions for the members of that particular group. Gordon Allport (1954) has referred prejudice as "*an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization*". This indicates that although prejudice is expressed toward a particular individual, the negative emotions are actually targeted to the whole group. Similar to stereotypes/schemas, prejudice too influences the way by which prejudiced person processes information related to the particular social group and information consistent with the prejudice is more readily attended, encoded and retrieved than the information which is inconsistent.

Some studies have also reported that prejudiced people differentiate social groups based on a belief that the groups have some common essence among all the group members which may be biologically influenced (Yzerbyt, Corneille, & Estrada, 2001). Prejudice is further referred to as an implicit or covert association between a person's being member of a particular social group and the evaluative emotional response a prejudiced person expresses toward that person. This suggests that in-group and out-group categorisation of our social world automatically activates emotional evaluation of the people belonging to the social groups and results into our corresponding responses toward them without being consciously aware of it.

#### 5.3.2.1 Sources of Prejudice

Prejudice has been one of the major causes of various types of armed conflicts among

different ethnic, racial, political and ideological groups in the world. Therefore, various sources of prejudice, as studied and reported by social psychologists, have been discussed below.

- ***Threat to Self Esteem***

People tend to evaluate their own group in a way more positive than the other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). When people perceive a threat to their group's image, they respond by a counter attack to the opposite group. This further leads to more strong identification with the in-group. Thus, it suggests that image of our own group is strengthened when we evaluate the other group in a negative, prejudiced, way. However, such a differential evaluation of in-group and out-group is more evident when the people see a threat to their own group from the out-group. For example, in an era of global terrorism a particular social group more strongly identifies with the in-group when it faces a terrorist attack. Simultaneously, members of the affected social group negatively evaluate the group they think responsible for the terrorist activity and consequently, they develop prejudice toward members of that social group. Tamborini et al. (2017) have reported that the research participants who were more exposed to the news coverage of the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks showed increased prejudice and reduced pro-social intentions toward the members of the social group they thought responsible for the incidence.

- ***Competition for Resources***

In realistic physical world, the commodities that are valued most are insufficient. Certainly, fertile lands, lucrative jobs, preferred places, etc. are limited on the earth and once a particular social group gets them, the other group is naturally deprived of those resources. The situation is referred to as **realistic conflict theory** (Bobo, 1983) which suggests that the social groups engaged in conflict for various resources view each other in extremely negative manner, often as enemies. Thus, a conflict for resources turns into a prejudice.

Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, and Sherif (1961) very efficiently demonstrated that how competition for resources can induce and intensify conflict between the groups. The researchers conducted an innovative field experiment commonly called as the Robbers Cave Experiment, a classic study in the field of social psychology. Two groups of boys (12 boys randomly assigned to each group) of similar socio-economic background were taken for a summer camp to a place near rural Oklahoma. At the camp location, both groups kept disconnected from each other. Boys of both the groups extensively enjoyed various activities, such as hiking, swimming, etc. and the members of both the groups very quickly developed in-group affiliation and attachment. They assigned names for their respective groups; Rattlers and Eagles, and also made their flags and T-shirts along with their group symbols stencilled on them. It further enhanced in-group affiliation and identification.

In the second phase of the study, the two groups were introduced to each other and were engaged in a series of inter-group competitions for which various trophies and prizes were on stake. This initiated very intense competition between the two groups which very soon resulted into positive evaluation of in-group and negative evaluation of out-group, very heated verbal conflicts, attack on each other's camps, etc.; and finally into development of strong prejudices toward each other.

- ***Social Categorisation and Prejudice***

Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, and Flament (1971) studied prejudice with the assumption that

conflicts at the individual level are not the essential components for the origin of prejudice. Tajfel argued that we categorise our social world into two categories; that is “us” (our in-groups) and “them” (out-groups). We are emotionally attached with the “us” category and it becomes a part of our social identity. Consequently, we evaluate and perceive the “us” category in a more positive way, whereas the “them” part of the social world is evaluated and perceived in a negative way. In a study, Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, and Flament (1971) randomly divided his participants into two halves and made them to “form” two groups on very unimportant bases. Although there was nothing common among the members in the in-groups, they allocated more points to the in-group members as compared to the members of the out-groups. Such discriminatory evaluations of social categories of “us” and “them” are believed to originate prejudice toward the other group.

### 5.3.3 Discrimination

When prejudice is expressed in overt behaviour, it is termed as discrimination. Discrimination is expressed in the form of discriminatory treatments, verbal aggression, violent behaviours, etc. by the members of prejudiced group toward the members of the target group. There have been several notable instances of discrimination based on racial, ethnic and gender biases in the history of mankind. For example, South Africa has witnessed a long history of apartheid where Native Blacks, Asian Africans and other coloured racial communities were legally denied from many basic facilities in the society. At its extreme level, the target racial communities were removed from their homes and were compelled to reside in designated confined places. In recent past, there have been several cases of violent crimes against Indian students in Australia. As per an investigation by the Indian Government, 23 out of 152 such cases reported in media in 2009 had their roots in racial discrimination (Indian Express, 25 February 2010). Of late, with a revolution in information technology there has been a surge in derogatory messages and posts against various social, racial and ethnic groups on social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.

However, similar to the attitudes prejudices are also not always overtly expressed in behaviours. Modern legal provisions, influences of democratic social norms, fear of retaliatory consequences, etc. prevent people to be overtly engaged in discriminatory behaviours towards the target social groups. Therefore, prejudices are expressed more often in disguised forms so that our prejudices are hidden and not known to others. Some of such disguised forms of discrimination are discussed below.

*Reluctance to help:* In the most subtle form of discrimination, members of prejudiced group are unwilling to help the members of target group in any ways which could improve their status in the society. For example, people of target group are denied for house on rent, flexible working hours or work from home facilities at workplace, etc.

*Tokenism:* Tokenism is a discriminatory behaviour in which people of the target society are offered with very insignificant and unimportant help from the prejudiced group. For example, few people of target group are offered for employment by an organisation in order to project its image in such a way that the organisation’s HR functions without any prejudice.

*Reverse discrimination:* In a more extreme form of tokenism, prejudiced people may offer help to the people of the target group, even out of the way. Although reverse discrimination may appear positive, it may have some harmful consequences in the long run; and also it fails to reduce the long held prejudices.

### 5.3.4 Reducing Stereotype, Prejudice and Discrimination

Stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory behaviours of people have significantly damaged the social fabric of almost every part of the world. However, many studies of social psychology have suggested many techniques to reduce stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination.

#### 5.3.4.1 Social Learning Approach

Social learning approach argues that stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination are learned by children in very young age by observing similar behaviours by the parents and other significant people. Subsequently, their behaviours expressing such negative attitudes are reinforced and strengthened by appreciating them. Furthermore, such negative attitudes are also formed by our interactions with the members of particular out-groups. Some studies have also reported that adopting these racial attitudes by the children corresponds to the extent they identify with their parents (Sinclair, Dunn, & Lowery, 2005). Arguably, the social learning creates a chain by which prejudices are transferred from one generation to the other. If parents refrain from reinforcing their children for expressing illogical negative attitudes toward particular social groups and encourage them to develop and hold logical and socially healthy attitudes, this chain can be broken and prejudices can be reduced.

#### 5.3.4.2 Increased Intergroup Contact

Prejudices are believed to develop on the basis of hearsay and rumour and even without any direct experience with the group. In almost every part of the world, groups involved in conflicts originated from stereotypes and prejudices live in separated areas restricting any direct interaction between the members of the groups. However, without any direct interaction people holding stereotypes and prejudices assume that all members of the particular group possess similar set of attributes (generally negative) and are strongly against out-groups. However, increasing intergroup contact, often referred to as *contact hypothesis*, may facilitate perception of similarities between the members of the two groups. Furthermore, people would also notice that there is considerable intra-group heterogeneity and the members of out-group differ in their attributes (Pettigrew, 1997).

#### 5.3.4.3 Recategorisation: Developing Common Social Identity

In the earlier sections, we have seen that people organise their social surroundings in in-groups and out-groups and evaluate members of in-groups in positive way, whereas people of out-group are evaluated in negative way. Let us take the example of IPL games in which cricket teams of different cities compete against one another. Here, we support the team of our city since we see our city as in-group and other cities as out-groups. But when our national team participates in the World Cup and competes against the teams of other countries, our social boundaries are recreated by integrating whole nation as the in-group, leading to develop a common social identity.

This *common in-group identity model* argues that when people from different groups recreate their social boundaries to form a common social identity, their earlier negative attitudes toward each other turn into positive ones. Sherif et al. (1961) suggested the ways by which the social boundary can be recreated. In the final phase of the Robber's Cave study, researchers obstructed the water supply which was common for both the groups and could be restored only with cooperative efforts of both the groups. This led the boys of the two groups to collaborate to achieve the common, *superordinate goal*. Researchers reported that the conflict between the two groups further reduced and members of both the groups started cooperating in other activities as well, resulting into development of friendships among boys across the groups.



#### 5.3.4.4 Feeling of Guilt Originated from Prejudice

Although people consciously behave consistent with their stereotypes and prejudices, they may subconsciously have feeling of guilt for behaving in a way that does not stand against real life experiences and logical thought process. Branscombe (2004) has further argued that people can also feel collective guilt for such stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory behaviours of other members of their in-group, even for the behaviours in the history by members of the past generations of their in-group. Based on a series of studies, Powell, Branscombe, and Schmitt (2005) suggested that when people reflect on the stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory behaviours of their own and of the generations of their in-group, it induces a feeling of collective guilt and subsequently reduces racist attitudes and behaviours.

#### 5.3.4.5 Learning to Negate Stereotypes

The underlying process in the origin of stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination is evaluating people on the basis of the group they belong to. Assuming out-group homogeneity, we tend to believe that certain traits and characteristics are shared by all the members of a particular social group. Once such cognitive structures are formed, they are activated automatically on exposure to the members of these groups which facilitates sustenance of prejudices. However, Kawakami, Dovidio, Moll, Hermsen, and Russn (2000) demonstrated that by encouraging people to consciously negate the stereotypes we can stop their automatic activation leading to reduced prejudice and discrimination.

#### 5.3.4.6 Social Influence

Social influence plays important role in formation and maintenance of stereotypes and prejudices. They are strengthened when behaviours consistent with the stereotypes and prejudices are endorsed and approved by the members of our in-group. This argument led Stanger, Sechrist, and Jost (2001) to demonstrate in one of their studies that if we are exposed to the examples where people of our in-groups disapprove or act against the stereotype and prejudice, popular in the in-group for a particular out-group, can reduce the specific stereotype and prejudice. The researchers, based on a study conducted on white American students, reported that when the research participants were informed that other white American students expressed positive views about African Americans, they also assigned more positive traits and less negative traits to the African Americans.

### Self Assessment Questions 2

**State whether the following are 'True' or 'False':**

- 1) Social influence plays important role in formation and maintenance of stereotypes and prejudices .....
- 2) Without any direct interaction people holding stereotypes and prejudices assume that all members of the particular group possess similar set of attributes .....
- 3) Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, and Flament (1971) studied prejudice with the assumption that conflicts at the individual level are not the essential components for the origin of prejudice .....
- 4) Prejudice refers to the beliefs that some traits and characteristics are shared by the members of a particular social group .....

- 5) Stereotype is defined as a feeling, primarily negative, toward a person exclusively on the basis that the person is member of a particular social group .....

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## 5.4 LET US SUM UP

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It can be summed up from the above unit that, although attitudes do not always predict behaviour, yet there are some factors that affect the relationship between attitude and behaviour. These factors include attitude specificity, attitude accessibility, self awareness, attitude certainty and attitude strength. Commonly used interchangeably, stereotype, prejudice and discrimination represent three different components of attitude. Stereotypes are beliefs that some traits and characteristics are shared by the members of a particular social group. Prejudice is defined as a feeling, primarily negative, toward a person exclusively on the basis that the person is member of a particular social group. When prejudice is expressed in overt behaviour, it is termed as discrimination and is expressed in the form of discriminatory treatments, verbal aggression, violent behaviours, etc. by the members of prejudiced group toward the members of the target group. In view of their damaging impacts on social harmony, social psychologists have suggested many techniques to reduce stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination.

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## 5.5 UNIT END QUESTIONS

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- 1) Elucidate the relationship between attitude and behaviour.
- 2) Define stereotype, prejudice and discrimination.
- 3) Discuss the sources of prejudice.
- 4) Discuss some of the disguised forms of discrimination.
- 5) Describe the ways to reduce stereotype, prejudice and discrimination.

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## 5.6 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

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### Self Assessment Questions 1

- 1) Attitude clarity and attitude correctness
- 2) Attitude
- 3) Private self awareness and public self awareness
- 4) Behaviour

### Self Assessment Questions 2

- 1) True
- 2) True
- 3) True
- 4) False
- 5) False

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## 5.7 GLOSSARY

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- Attitude-behaviour link** : Refers the extent to which a person's attitude predicts his or her behaviour.
- Attitude accessibility** : The attitudes that are more easily accessible; more strongly influence the person's behaviour.
- Stereotype** : Belief that some traits and characteristics are shared by almost all the members of a particular social group.
- Prejudice** : Defined as a feeling, primarily negative, toward a person exclusively on the basis that the person is member of a particular social group.
- Realistic conflict theory** : The theory suggesting that the social groups engaged in conflict for various resources view each other in extremely negative manner, often as enemies.
- Social categorisation** : Refers to the tendency to categorise the social world into two categories; "us" (in-groups) and "them" (out-groups).
- Discrimination** : An overt expression of prejudice in behaviour, often in the form of discriminatory treatments, verbal aggression, violent behaviours, etc. by the members of prejudiced group toward the members of the target group.
- Reluctance to help** : A subtle form of discrimination, members of prejudiced group are unwilling to help the members of target group in any ways which could improve their status in the society.
- Tokenism** : A discriminatory behaviour in which people of the target society are offered with very insignificant and unimportant help from the prejudiced group.
- Reverse discrimination** : An extreme form of tokenism, prejudiced people may offer help to the people of the target group, even out of the way.
- Common in-group identity model** : Argument that when people from different groups recreate their social boundaries to form a common social identity, their earlier negative attitudes toward each other turn into positive ones.
- Superordinate goal** : A goal common for the conflicting groups that can be restored only with cooperative efforts of the groups.

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