

Sociocultural Approach

- *Slide 17+18(online) - summary.*
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Researchers have been attempting to explain behavior, memory, and cognition in **biological terms** since humans tend to share common experiences and tend to develop common ways of thinking. But now, researches use the dual approach by taking the **social background** and the **cultural factors*** into consideration.

The sociocultural approach looks at the human life as a whole by understanding the motivations that drive us to behave in a particular way and how we acquire cognitive abilities in at an early age. And as the name implies, this approach revolves around the way the **society affects our learning process** and how the **cultural factors** as language and art contribute to our **cognitive abilities.** (slide2-5)

***Sociocultural factors** are the forces within cultures and societies that affect the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of individuals and they include: (slide18-19)

Attitudes	Child rearing practice	Cross-cultural differences	Cultural deprivation
Cultural identity	Culture changes	Discrimination	Ethnic identity
Ethnic values	Religious practices	Face (sociological concept)	Family structure
Kinship structure	Power	Race	Racial & ethnic group
Regional differences	Religious beliefs		

Key Components of the Sociocultural Approach: also could be considered as the factors that affect the child's developmental progress. (I think, not sure) – slide6

- 1- **Learning** is a crucial part of passing down culture ideas from parents to children.
- 2- **Language** is crucial to children's mental development.
- 3- **Child's upbringing and social context.**
- 4- **Experience and cultural tools** through which Children are capable of creating their own knowledge.

The role of social relations in health and disease

• Social relationships affect a person's health; they have short-term and long-term effects on health for better and for worse. **Social relationships, both quantity and quality, affects:**

- ✓ Health behavior, both; mental and physical health.
- ✓ Mortality risk.

➔ **Through:**

- ✓ Behavioural pathways.
- ✓ Psychosocial pathways.
- ✓ And physiological pathways.

- Social support and family and community strengths and abilities are important when considering prevention and treatment of disease and disabilities. So, health promotion rests on the shoulders not only of individuals but also of their families and communities. But, for a social support to be health promoting, it must provide both a sense of **belonging and intimacy** and must help people to be **more competent and self-efficacious**.

- It is believed that social ties reduce mortality risk among adults with medical disorders. Recent studies indicate that social support is particularly related to survival post myocardial infarction.

- And Social isolation is believed to result in psychological and physiological disintegration and even death, individual with the lowest level of involvement in social relationships and who are isolated are at increased mortality risk from a number of causes. (slides;7-13)

And here is a list of medical conditions that are linked to low quantity and quality of social ties: (slide12)

- ✓ Cardiovascular disease.
- ✓ Recurrent myocardial infarction.
- ✓ Atherosclerosis.

- ✓ Autonomic dysregulation.
- ✓ High blood pressure.
- ✓ Cancer.
- ✓ Delayed recovery from cancer.
- ✓ Slower wound healing.
- ✓ Immunological disorders.

Sociology: (slide14-33)

It has many definitions; it could be defined as the **academic study of social behavior**; its origins, development, organization, and institutions.

Or systemic and the scientific study of the society including:

- ✓ Its structure.
- ✓ The way it operates.
- ✓ How it is changing.
- ✓ The influence of society on the experience and behavior of the individuals within it.

Society is a group of people involved with each other through persistent relations, or a large social grouping sharing the same geographical or social territory, subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. And it enables its members to benefit in ways that would not otherwise be possible on an individual basis.

So, human societies are characterized by patterns of social relationships between individuals who share a distinctive culture and institutions.

A society may be illustrated as an economic, social, or industrial infrastructure, made up of a varied collection of individuals. And members of a society may be from different ethnic groups.

The society can also consist of like-minded people governed by their own norms and values within a dominant, larger society. This is referred to as a sub-culture. A biker gang is an example of a subculture (I think).

• A society can be a particular:

- 1- Ethnic group, such as the Saxons.
- 2- Nation state, such as Bhutan.
- 3- A broader cultural group, such as a Western society.

But what is a community?

Community has two distinct meanings:

1. It can refer to a usually small, social unit of any size that shares common values. For example, your neighbourhood is a community.
2. The term can also refer to the national or international community.

- In human communities, intent, belief, resources, needs, preferences, risks, and a number of other conditions may be present and common, affecting the identity of the participants and their degree of cohesiveness.

Culture is defined as the shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs, and affective understanding that are learned through a process of socialization.

- These shared patterns identify the members of a culture group while also distinguishing those of another group.

Sociology focuses on:

- ✓ Social mobility.
- ✓ Religion.
- ✓ Law.
- ✓ Sexuality.
- ✓ Deviance.
- ✓ Social class; refers to people having the same social, economic, or educational status with broadly similar styles of living and some shared perceptions of their common condition.
 - It is closely related to occupation.
 - Households, wives, and children's social class is assigned **according to the occupation of the household.**
- ✓ Social stratification; ranking of individuals, groups, or segments of the population distinguished according to social characteristics considered by the culture important.
 - Social stratification may be based on; social class, gender and ethnicity. More detailed definitions;

****First, Gender:** It refers to differences in social characteristics assigned to males and females. And it affects the roles in society assigned to men and women and how we're expected to speak, dress or act based upon our assigned gender, for example; men were considered responsible for taking care of the family financially, and women were expected to be in charge of running the household! And that –unfortunately- leads us to **Gender Stereotypes** which are perceived ideas about appropriate styles of behavior for men (aggressive, active) and women (passive, compliant).

****Second, Race and Ethnicity;**

Ethnicity denotes membership of a social group with a common set of norms, values and beliefs expressed in a common language, religion, dress, diet and other symbols and some sense of a common origin or

homeland. And Race refers to groups of people who have differences and similarities in biological characteristics or traits. And based on absolute nonsense, it can be ranked as inherently superior or inferior to others, or that members of different races should be treated differently!!

The Stratification system based on race and ethnicity disadvantages minorities, and is expressed as:

- Racial prejudice.
- Discrimination.
- Racism.

Racism is generally defined as actions, practices, or beliefs that consider the human species to be divided into races with shared traits, abilities, or qualities, such as personality, intellect, morality, or other cultural behavioral characteristics.

Racism and racial discrimination are often used to describe discrimination on an ethnic or cultural basis, independent of whether these differences are described as racial.

- But sociology has gradually expanded its focus to further subjects, such as **health, medical, military and penal institutions, education** and the role of social activity in the development of scientific knowledge.
- The sociology of health and illness focuses on the social effects of, and public attitudes toward illnesses, diseases, mental health and disabilities.

Social psychology is a branch of psychology concerned with the way feelings, beliefs, thoughts, intentions and goals are constructed and how these factors, in turn, influence interactions with others. It deals with the factors* that lead us to behave in a given way in the presence of others, and look at the conditions under which certain behavior/actions and feelings occur. *The factors we're talking about here are the ones that were previously written in the table above.

It explains human behavior as a result of the interaction of mental states and social situations. Thus, it seeks to develop a body of knowledge about social order, social disorder and social change.

Attitude refers to evaluation of things. The things can be concrete objects like cars or ideas like Marxism.

- Attitudes have:

- An affective component.
- A cognitive component.
- A behavioral component.

- Attitude change can occur through:

- Self-monitoring which acts to keep our attitudes in line with our behavior. Nevertheless, the link between Attitudes & Behavior is weak because of the presence of other cognitions, social pressure and forgetting attitude at time of acting.
- Experience.
- Persuasion.
- Cognitive Dissonance is a theory proposed by Leon **Festinger** in (1957), which refers to a situation involving conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviors. This produces a feeling of mental discomfort leading to an alteration in one of the attitudes, beliefs or behaviors to reduce the discomfort and restore balance. Or as mentioned in slides; is a state of discomfort and tension which arises when we realize that two or more of our cognitions are inconsistent with each other. And based on this definition people usually seek to reduce cognitive dissonance.

Attitudes are measurable

Scales for measurement of attitudes include:

- 1- **Semantic differential scale:** asks a person to rate an issue or topic on a standard set of **bipolar adjectives** (i.e. with opposite meanings), each representing a **seven point scale**. To prepare a semantic differential scale, you must first think of a number of words with opposite meanings that are applicable to describing the subject of the test. For example, participants are given a word, for example 'car', and presented with a variety of adjectives to describe it. Respondents tick to indicate how they feel about what is being measured.
- 2- **Thurstone scale** was the first formal technique to measure an attitude. It is made up of statements about a particular issue, and each statement has a numerical value indicating how favorable or unfavorable it is judged to be. People check each of the statements to which they agree, and a mean score is computed, indicating their attitude.

3- **Likert scale**; with this scale, respondents are asked to rate items on a level of agreement. For example:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Five to seven items are usually used in the scale. The scale doesn't have to state "agree" or "disagree"; dozens of variations are possible on themes like agreement, frequency, quality and importance.

For example:

- Agreement: Strongly agree to strongly disagree.
- Frequency: Often to never.
- Quality: Very good to very bad.
- Likelihood: Definitely to never.
- Importance: Very important to unimportant.

These items are called *Likert Scale Response Anchors*. (not mentioned in slides though)

- Once the respondents have answered, numbers are assigned to the responses. For example:
Strongly agree=5
Agree=4
Neutral=3
Disagree=2
Strongly disagree=1 and this enables you to assign meaning to the responses.

Attribution theory of motivation:

Attribution Theory attempts to explain the world and to determine the cause of an event or behavior (e.g. why people do what they do) that is, interpret causes to an event or behavior.

Attribution may be caused by:

- the Situations are in (Situational Attribution)
- the personality (Constitutional, Dispositional Attribution)

Judgment of behavior of people is based on:

- ✓ Consensus.
- ✓ Distinctiveness.
- ✓ Consistency.

Note: Slides 40 to 66 are copied as they are since each slide talks about a separate definition:

Impression Formation

- People often form impressions of others from irrelevant or unimportant material.
- Impression management: people tend to control the impressions others form about them.
- Stereotypes refer to generalizations based on such large categories of people.
- **Generalizations are almost certain to be wrong.**
- Impressions can sometimes become “self-fulfilling prophecies”.

Social Attraction

Social attraction towards other people is an almost a universal feature of mankind. The following are factors that contribute to the formation of social interaction:

- Proximity
- Exposure
- Physical attraction
- Holding similar views
- Self-disclosure

Leadership is the process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the achievement of a common task.

- **No set of characteristics which make a person a leader.**
- Qualities demanded of a leader depend on the situation.
- Combination of individual’s qualities and the particular situation makes someone an effective leader.

Leadership is **strongly related to “power”**:

- Legitimate power (power flowing from a particular role or job)
- Reward power (control over the rewarding of others e.g., having a lot of money)

- Expert power (is attained by the manager due to his or her own talents such as skills, knowledge, abilities, or previous experience).

Conformity is the tendency to agree with others in a group.

Conformity is determined by:

- Need for social approval.
- Informational influence (tendency to validate our understanding of the world against that of others).
- Obedience.
- Social pressure.
- Cohesive group.

Group effect on Behaviour

1. Social facilitation; the mere presence of others may improve performance on simple well-learned tasks.
2. Social inhibition:
 - Presence of others inhibits learning complex tasks.
 - Groups are often thought of as making “lowest common denominator” decisions of being devoted to compromise.
3. Risky shift which refers to the phenomenon where a group makes a decision that carries inherently higher risk than a decision that each of the individuals would have made on their own. Once a group of people start a discussion on a topic, their positions and opinions become polarized and more extreme. Those in the middle, the moderates, are either pushed to one extreme or the other or become silenced.

Intra-group & Inter-group Behaviour

People normally join groups to get social reward, prestige, achieve things or get forced to join!

After joining a group, **group cohesiveness** arises; which refers to the extent of unity in the group and is reflected in members' conformity to the norms of the group, feeling of attraction for each other and wanting to be co-members of the group. Attraction, cohesiveness and conformity are all intertwined. The more the members feel attracted to the group, the greater will be the group cohesiveness. The greater the cohesiveness, the greater the influence of the group members to persuade one another to conform to the group norms! The greater the conformity, the greater the identity of the members to the group and the greater the group cohesiveness! Not from slides.

→And the more rewarding the group the more cohesive it tends to be.

Notes:

- Group cohesiveness is often matched by an increase in positive cognitions about one's own group and negative cognitions towards other groups perceived as rivals. And it tends to be reinforced when the group is competing against other groups.
- Under some circumstances, negative cognitions. About the out-group can run to outright hostility.
- Identification to a group identifies non-members (the out-group). This has negative consequences and it can produce prejudice.

Prejudice

- Prejudice is mainly based on stereotypes about out-group members.
- It may be reduced when members of two ethnic groups are of equal socioeconomic status.
- Prejudice may be reduced by getting members of different groups to work co-operatively together on tasks.

Eye contact

- Eye contact occurs when two people look at each other's eyes at the same time.
- Eye contact is a form of "non-verbal communication" and is thought to have a large influence on "social behavior".
- The act is a meaningful and important sign of confidence and social communication.
- Different cultures have different rules of eye contact and these can lead to erroneous misunderstandings, with religious and social differences often altering its meaning greatly.

Altruism (helping others) refers to behavior of people to help others while not receiving a gain themselves.

- Altruism boosts self-esteem by complying with a social norm that values helping others.
- Altruism may result from Empathy (our ability to identify with other people and their sufferings).
- Altruism reflects "reciprocity" (refers to responding to a positive action with another positive action, rewarding kind actions).

The Self (the "I")

- Self-concept: A subjective idea about who are we.

- Self-recognition: The ability to recognize our-selves as being distinguishable from others.
- Self-image: The sort of person we think we are (good or bad).
- Self-esteem: How favorably or unfavorably we evaluate ourselves as influenced by our early upbringing and social comparisons.

Values and Norms

- Values refer to collective belief about what is right, good and desirable that has developed within a social group.
- Norms refer to expected ways of behaving in specific situations which reflect the values of the group.
- Values and norms help to regulate individual's behavior by defining certain goals and the means of attaining them.
- Individuals learn values and norms through the process of socialization.

Anomie refers to a state of "normlessness" or lack of the usual ethical standards in an individual or group.

- Anomie is a "condition in which society provides little moral guidance to individuals". And it leads to the breakdown of social bonds between an individual and the community.

- **Delinquency, crime, and suicide are often reactions to anomie.**

It is associated with considerable psychological distress and is classified to:

→ Acute anomie is caused by sudden change or crisis

(Migration, bereavement, redundancy) which places the individual in an unfamiliar situation.

→ Chronic anomie refers to circumstances where the rules of a social group have become unclear to individuals or do not provide means of meeting aspirations (long term unemployment or homelessness).

Socialization is the process by which individuals learn values and norms:

→ Primary socialization:

– Is the informal process through which children learn to be competent members of their particular social groups (ethnic, religious, class).

– Largely takes place in the family.

→ Secondary socialization: refers to the process of learning what is the appropriate behavior as a member of a smaller group within the larger society, it is a more formal process through which individuals learn the norms associated with particular roles in society.

Social Role

- **Social Role:** is the pattern of behavior associated with a particular position or status in society (teacher, client, and daughter).
- It can be described in terms of:
Behavior towards others (obligations) expected of the individual occupying the position, and the behavior from others (rights) expected in return.

Role Conflict

- Conflict among the roles begins because of the human desire to reach success, and because of the pressure put on an individual by two imposing and incompatible demands competing against each other.
- The effects of role conflict are related to individual personality characteristics and interpersonal relations.
- Role conflict may create considerable anxiety and a sense of inadequacy and failure in never living up to expectations.

Deviant behavior is a behavior which contravenes the norms and values of the group and leads to social disapproval and may be stigmatizing. Once deviance has been identified, mechanisms of **social control** are called upon to correct it and to stop from spreading, these may involve sanctions. Sanctions are designed to maintain and enforce the norms and values of a social group and through the process of socialization and the mechanisms of social control, the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the individual are shaped and patterned according to the values, norms and roles of the social group.

Stigma refers to an attribute of an individual which makes the possessor as unacceptable, inferior and spoils identity.

Social structure refers to the broad arrangement of social groups within a society. It is the organized pattern of social relationships and social institutions that together compose society.

- Social class is one example of social structure.
- Social class as a social structure, it guides and shapes human behavior at all levels, no matter how overtly visible or invisible it is at any given time.

Household & Family

- Household is a domestic unit consisting of the members of a family who live together along with nonrelatives such as servants.

- Defined in terms of residence
- Family defined in terms of kinship, marriage or parenthood

Nuclear family: refers to parents and children.

Extended family: includes other people related by blood or marriage.

Social integration refers to the cohesion within a social group or community created by ties between individuals involving reciprocal responsibilities and mutual obligations.

- Main integrating factors in society include:
 - Marriage.
 - Employment.
 - Religious affiliations.
 - Voluntary or political organizations.

That's all!