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UNIT-1

Man and society- Theories of man and society, Methodological individualism, structuralism.
Society and its features- Social Institutions; Social Stratification and Change; Contemporary
Indian Philosophy-its characteristics and Cross-cultural Issues.

SOCIETY

Introduction

The society in which we live determines everything from the food we eat to the choices we make. The word *society* comes from the latin root *socius*, meaning "companion" or "being with others." A society consists of people who share a territory, who interact with each other, and who share a culture. Some societies are, in fact, groups of people united by friendship or common interests. Our respective societies teach us how to behave, what to believe, and how we'll be punished if we don't follow the laws or customs in place.

Sociologists study the way people learn about their own society's cultures and how they discover their place within those cultures. They also examine the ways in which people from differing cultures interact and sometimes clash--and how mutual understanding and respect might be reached.

What Is a Society?

According to sociologists, a **society** is a group of people with common territory, interaction, and culture. **Social groups** consist of two or more people who interact and identify with one another.

- **Territory:** Most countries have formal boundaries and territory that the world recognizes as theirs. However, a society's boundaries don't have to be geopolitical borders, such as the one between the United States and Canada. Instead, members of a society, as well as nonmembers, must recognize particular land as belonging to that society.

Example: The society of the Yanomamo has fluid but definable land boundaries.

Located in a South American rain forest, Yanomamo territory extends along the border of Brazil and Venezuela. While outsiders would have a hard time determining where Yanomamo land begins and ends, the Yanomamo and their neighbors have no trouble discerning which land is theirs and which is not.

- **Interaction:** Members of a society must come in contact with one another. If a group of people within a country has no regular contact with another group, those groups cannot be considered part of the same society. Geographic distance and language barriers can separate societies within a country.

Example: Although Islam was practiced in both parts of the country, the residents of East Pakistan spoke Bengali, while the residents of West Pakistan spoke Urdu. Geographic distance, language differences, and other factors proved insurmountable. In 1971, the nation split into two countries, with West Pakistan assuming the name Pakistan and East Pakistan becoming Bangladesh. Within each newly formed society, people had a common culture, history, and language, and distance was no longer a factor.

- **Culture:** People of the same society share aspects of their culture, such as language or beliefs. **Culture** refers to the language, values, beliefs, behavior, and material objects that constitute a people's way of life. It is a defining element of society.

Example: Some features of American culture are the English language, a democratic system of government, cuisine (such as hamburgers and corn on the cob), and a belief in individualism and freedom.

Types of Societies

The society we live in did not spring up overnight; human societies have evolved slowly over many millennia. However, throughout history, technological developments have sometimes brought about dramatic change that has propelled human society into its next age.

Hunting and Gathering Societies

Hunting and gathering societies survive by hunting game and gathering edible plants. Until about 12,000 years ago, all societies were hunting and gathering societies.

There are five basic characteristics of hunting and gathering societies:

1. The primary institution is the family, which decides how food is to be shared and how children are to be socialized, and which provides for the protection of its members.
2. They tend to be small, with fewer than fifty members.

3. They tend to be nomadic, moving to new areas when the current food supply in a given area has been exhausted.
4. Members display a high level of interdependence.
5. Labor division is based on sex. men hunt, and women gather.

The first social revolution—the domestication of plants and animals—led to the birth of the horticultural and pastoral societies.

Twilight of the Hunter-Gatherers

Hunting and gathering societies are slowly disappearing, as the encroachment of civilization destroys the land they depend on. The Pygmies in Africa are one of the few remaining such societies.

Horticultural Societies

In a horticultural society, hand tools are used to tend crops. The first horticultural societies sprang up about 10,000–12,000 years ago in the most fertile areas of the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia. The tools they used were simple: sticks or hoe-like instruments used to punch holes in the ground so that crops could be planted. With the advent of horticultural machinery, people no longer had to depend on the gathering of edible plants—they could now grow their own food. They no longer had to leave an area when the food supply was exhausted, as they could stay in one place until the soil was depleted.

Pastoral Societies

A pastoral society relies on the domestication and breeding of animals for food. Some geographic regions, such as the desert regions of North Africa, cannot support crops, so these societies learned how to domesticate and breed animals. The members of a pastoral society must move only when the grazing land ceases to be usable. Many pastoral societies still exist in Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia.

Job Specialization

As techniques for raising crops and domesticating and breeding animals improved, societies began to produce more food than they needed. Societies also became larger and more

permanently rooted to one location. For the first time in human history, not everyone was engaged in the gathering or production of food. As a result, job specialization emerged. While some people farmed or raised animals, others produced crafts, became involved in trade, or provided such goods as farming tools or clothing.

Agricultural Societies

The invention of the plow during the horticultural and pastoral societies is considered the **second social revolution**, and it led to the establishment of agricultural societies approximately five thousand to six thousand years ago. Members of an **agricultural or agrarian society** tend crops with an animal harnessed to a plow. The use of animals to pull a plow eventually led to the creation of cities and formed the basic structure of most modern societies.

The development of agricultural societies followed this general sequence:

- Animals are used to pull plows.
- Larger areas of land can then be cultivated.
- As the soil is aerated during plowing, it yields more crops for longer periods of time.
- Productivity increases, and as long as there is plenty of food, people do not have to move.
- Towns form, and then cities.
- As crop yields are high, it is no longer necessary for every member of the society to engage in some form of farming, so some people begin developing other skills. Job specialization increases.
- Fewer people are directly involved with the production of food, and the economy becomes more complex.

Around this same time, the wheel was invented, along with writing, numbers, and what we would today call the arts. However, the invention of the steam engine—the **third social revolution**—was what took humans from agricultural to industrial society.

Roots of Gender Inequality

As people moved toward domesticating animals and using them to do work, males tended to dominate more of the workforce, since physical strength was necessary to control animals. By the time societies became agricultural, males all but dominated the production of food. Since then, more prestige has been accorded to traditionally male jobs than to traditionally female jobs, and hence, to males more than to females.

Industrial Societies

An industrial society uses advanced sources of energy, rather than humans and animals, to run large machinery. Industrialization began in the mid-1700s, when the steam engine was first used in Great Britain as a means of running other machines. By the twentieth century, industrialized societies had changed dramatically:

- People and goods traversed much longer distances because of innovations in transportation, such as the train and the steamship.
- Rural areas lost population because more and more people were engaged in factory work and had to move to the cities.
- Fewer people were needed in agriculture, and societies became urbanized, which means that the majority of the population lived within commuting distance of a major city.
- Suburbs grew up around cities to provide city-dwellers with alternative places to live.

The twentieth century also saw the invention of the automobile and the harnessing of electricity, leading to faster and easier transportation, better food storage, mass communication, and much more. Occupational specialization became even more pronounced, and a person's vocation became more of an identifier than his or her family ties, as was common in nonindustrial societies.

Rural Urban
Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft

Villages modernized
Sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies divided societies into two large

categories: Gemeinschaft societies and Gesellschaft societies. Gemeinschaft societies consist primarily of villages in which everyone knows everyone else. Relationships are lifelong and based on kinship. A Gesellschaft society is modernized. People have little in common with

one another, and relationships are short term and based on self-interest, with little concern for the well-being of others.

Postindustrial Societies

(1760-1840)

The Industrial Revolution transformed Western societies in many unexpected ways. All the machines and inventions for producing and transporting goods reduced the need for human labor so much that the economy transformed again, from an industrial to a postindustrial economy.

A postindustrial society, the type of society that has developed over the past few decades, features an economy based on services and technology, not production. There are three major characteristics of a postindustrial economy:

1. **Focus on ideas:** Tangible goods no longer drive the economy.
2. **Need for higher education:** Factory work does not require advanced training, and the new focus on information and technology means that people must pursue greater education.
3. **Shift in workplace from cities to homes:** New communications technology allows work to be performed from a variety of locations.

Mass Society

As industrialized societies grow and develop, they become increasingly different from their less industrialized counterparts. As ^{societies} they become larger, they evolve into large, impersonal mass societies. In a mass society, individual achievement is valued over kinship ties, and people often feel isolated from one another. Personal incomes are generally high, and there is great diversity among people.

Norms

Every society has expectations about how its members should and should not behave.

A **norm** is a guideline or an expectation for behavior. Each society makes up its own rules for behavior and decides when those rules have been violated and what to do about it. Norms change constantly.

How Norms Differ

Norms differ widely among societies, and they can even differ from group to group within the same society.

✓ Different settings: ^{circumstances} Wherever we go, expectations are placed on our behavior. Even within the same society, these norms change from setting to setting.

Example: The way we are expected to behave in church differs from the way we are expected to behave at a party, which also differs from the way we should behave in a classroom.

✓ Different countries: Norms are place-specific, and what is considered appropriate in one country may be considered highly inappropriate in another.

Example: In some African countries, it's acceptable for people in movie theaters to yell frequently and make loud comments about the film. In the United States, people are expected to sit quietly during a movie, and shouting would be unacceptable.

✓ Different time periods: Appropriate and inappropriate behavior often changes dramatically from one generation to the next. Norms can and do shift over time.

Example: In the United States in the 1950s, a woman almost never asked a man out on a date, nor did she pay for the date. While some traditional norms for dating prevail, most women today feel comfortable asking men out on dates and paying for some or even all of the expenses.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIETY

1. Society is a largest Human group
2. It satisfies the needs of its members
3. One of the characteristics of society is having ^{there is} sense of belonging & cooperation. It is more or less a permanent association.
4. It is abstract (Because social relationships can be felt & imagined & cannot be seen)
5. Everyone in society is dependent upon every other member.
6. It should be organized. i.e will be having division of labor.
7. It should be having likeness & differences. Due to these differences, variety in human behavior & division of labour & specialization of role is there.
8. "There is consciousness of kind". Among the members of society.
9. It is always changing.
10. It has its own means to survive
11. It is a self sufficient social system.
12. It lasts for longer period of time than groups & communities.

Individual → family → Community → Society → Global

Philosophy - love of wisdom - Greek philosophy
(study of general & fundamental questions) about existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, language
Sociology - study of human societies & social behaviour

13. It will form a social structure through social institutions.

14. Society has its own culture.

ORIGIN OF SOCIETY

Human beings are social animals. They live in social groups in communities and in society.

Human life and society almost go together. Human beings cannot live without society.

Human beings are biologically and psychologically equipped to live in groups, in society.

Society has become an essential condition for human life to arise and to continue. The relationship between individual and society is ultimately one of the profound of all the problems of social philosophy. It is both philosophical and sociological because it involves the question of practices on the one hand, and, norms and values on the other. Human beings depend on society. It is in the society that an individual is surrounded and encompassed by culture, a societal force. It is in the society again that s/he has to conform to the norms, occupy statuses and become members of groups. The question of the relationship between the individual and the society is the starting point of many discussions. There are two main theories regarding the relationship of the individual and society. They are the social contract theory and the organismic theory

Social Contract theory

(The social contract theory throws light on the origin of the society. According to this theory all men are born free and equal. Society came into existence because of the agreement entered into by the individuals.) The classical representatives of this school of thought are Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Rousseau.

Thomas Hobbes

(Thomas Hobbes was of opinion ^{He says} that society came into being as a means for the protection of men against the consequences of their own nature. Man in the state of nature was in perpetual conflict with his neighbors on account of his essentially selfish nature.) 'The life of man was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'. Every man was an enemy to every other man.

(Hobbes in his book Leviathan has made it clear that man found nothing but grief in the company of his fellows. Since the conditions in the state of nature were intolerable and men longed for peace the people entered into a kind of social contract to ensure for themselves security and certainty of life and property.)

(By mutual agreement they decided to surrender their natural rights into the hands of a few or one with authority to command.) The agreement was of each with all and of all with each other. (The contract became binding on the whole community as perpetual social bond.) Thus

in order to protect himself against the evil consequences of his own nature man organized himself in society in order to live in peace with all.

John Locke

John Locke believed that man in the state of nature was enjoying an ideal liberty free from all sorts of rules and regulations. The state of nature was a state of peace, goodwill, mutual assistance and preservation. But there was no recognized system of law and justice. Hence his peaceful life was often upset by the corruption and viciousness of degenerate men. The men were forced to live in full of fears and continual dangers.

(In order to escape from this and to gain certainty and security men made a contract to enter into civil society or the state. This contract Locke called social contract.) This contract put an end to the state of nature and substituted it by civil society. (The social contract was no more than a surrender of rights and powers so that man's remaining rights would be protected and preserved. The contract was for limited and specific purposes) and what was given up or surrendered to the whole community and not to a man or to an assembly of men. According to Locke the social contract later on contributed to the governmental control.) The governmental contract was made by the society when it established a government and selected a ruler to remove the inconveniences of ill-condition.

(Jean Jacques Rousseau Rousseau the French writer of the 18th century in his famous book The Social Contract wrote that man in the state of nature was a noble savage who led a life of primitive simplicity and idyllic happiness.) He was independent, contented, self-sufficient, healthy, fearless and good. (It was only primitive instinct and sympathy which united him with others.) He knew neither right or wrong and was free from all notions of virtue and vice.

Man enjoyed a pure, unsophisticated, innocent life of perfect freedom and equality in the state of nature. But these conditions did not last long. (Population increased and ^{later} reason was dawned.) (Simplicity and idyllic happiness disappeared. Families were established, institution of property emerged and human equality was ended. Man began to think in terms of mine and yours.)

When equality and happiness of the early state was lost, war, murder, conflicts became the order of the day. (The escape from this was found in the formation of a civil society. Natural freedom gave place to civil freedom by a social contract.) As a result of this contract a multitude of individuals became a collective unity- a civil society. Rousseau said that by virtue of this contract everyone while uniting himself to all remains as free as before.

(There was only one contract which was social as well as political. The individual surrendered himself completely and unconditionally to the will of the body of which he became a member. The body so created was a moral and collective body and Rousseau called it the

general will. (The unique feature of the general will was that it represented collective good as distinguished from the private interests of its members.)

CRITICISM

(The theory of social contract has been widely criticized as historically there is nothing to show that the society has ever been deliberately created as a result of voluntary agreement or contract. Nor can we suppose that man could ever think of entering into a contract with others when he lived under conditions of extreme simplicity, ignorance and even brutality.) The theory seemed to be mere fiction as state of nature never existed. The most primitive people even lived in some form of society however rudimentary or unorganized. (There are always two parties to the contract. There cannot be a one-sided contract as was conceived by Hobbes.) The advocates of the theory hold that the early individuals entered into the contract for their individual safety and security of property. But history tells us the other way.

(Early law was more communal than individual and the unit of society was not the individual but the family.) Society has moved from status to contract and not from contract to status as the theorists of the social contract argued. According to Sir Henry Maine contract is not the beginning of society but the end of it.

Organismic Theory - Herbert Spencer

Organismic theory is another vital theory of the origin of human society. Plato, Aristotle, Herbert Spencer, Spengler and Novico were the main exponents of this theory. (They have compared the society with a living human body or organism.)

According to them, society is nothing but a kind of living organism, biological organism. In other words, (the organismic theory ~~view~~ society is a living organism possessing organs, which perform functions analogues to these of a plant or animal.) Among all these scholars Herbert Spencer has occupied unique place, because of this significant contribution in the field of organismic theory or society.

According to Spencer, society is not merely a collection of individuals, it is more than that, just as an organism is more than a mere collection of cells. Spencer developed the organismic theory by making an elaborate comparison between the society and the organism. He thinks that society is like a biological system a greater organism, a like in its structure and functions. Like an organism, society is also subject of the same process of gradual growth or development from a simple to complex "state. Like an organism, society is also exhibits differentiation in functions and integration in structure". Thus according to the organismic theory of society, society is an organism whose structure and function resemble those of the human beings and which also develops according to the same laws.

(Herbert Spencer indicates that society resembles an organism in the following important respects.)

1. Society like organism grows or develops gradually. The human organism goes through the laws of development, maturation and decline. Similarly society also passes through some laws such as the laws of birth, growth and change or decay."

2. Both society and organism begin germs. ✗

3. Society and organism both exhibit differential structure functions.)

4. Both society and organism are composed of units. Society is composed of the individuals and thus, individuals are considered as the units of society. Similarly, organism is also composed of different organs such as eyes, ears, hands, legs, head etc., and these are regarded as the units of an organism.

5. In both society and organism there exists close integration or interdependence of parts. Just as the different parts of the organism are mutually interdependence and on the whole, also the individuals in a dependant are mutually interdependent like the cells in an organism dependent in the whole.

In spite of these similarities, Spencer also draws number of structural analogies between the society and organism. A living organism possesses sustaining system and distributing system and regulative system corresponding respective to system of production of industry and agriculture, the means of transportation and communication and the government, in society in the industrial and agricultural systems the circulatory system with the heart arteries and veins correspond to the communication and transportation system of nation the nervous system to the government and so on. An individual cell of an organism may die with little effect on its life, similarly the death of an individual.

According to P.A. Sorokin society passes through the organic process of birth, youth, maturity, old age and death.

(On the basis of the above resemblances Spencer concluded that society is an organismic and it is a special organism. The individuals are limbs of the society and behave as the cells of the body whose activity and life are meant for the sake of the whole. Just as the limbs separated from the body have no life, similarly individuals separated from the society have no life. The individuals exist in and within the society.)

In addition to the above points of-similarities, there are however, certain points of dissimilarities also.

According to Spencer society differs from human organism in the following important respects.)

1. In organic growth, nature plays a dominant and organismic naturally grows. On the other hand, social growth may be checked or stimulated by man himself.

2. The units of a society are not fixed in their respective positions like those of the individual

organism SYSTEM	SOCIETY	Organism	STRUCTURAL ANALOGIES
Sustaining system	Agriculture & Industrial production	Growth and Development	
Distributing "	Communication & Transport	Circulatory	
Regulative "	government	nervous sys.	

✓ In an organism, consciousness is concentrated in the small part of the aggregate, that is, in the nervous system while in a society it is diffused throughout whole aggregate.

Relationship between the Individual and Society

According to Peter Berger, society not only controls our movements but shapes our identity, our thought and our emotions. The structures of society become the structures of our own consciousness. Society does not stop at the surface of our skins. We are entrapped by our own social nature. Berger is of the opinion that the walls of our imprisonment were there before we appeared on the scene but they are ever rebuilt by ourselves. We are betrayed into the captivity ourselves. We are betrayed into the captivity with our own cooperation. Berger emphasizes that it was there before we were born and it will be there after we are dead. Our lives are but episodes in its majestic march through time. In sum society is the walls of our imprisonment in history. According to Emile Durkheim, society confronts us as an objective fact. Society is external to ourselves. It encompasses our entire life. The institutions of society pattern our actions and even shape our expectations. We are located in society not only in space but also in time. Our society is a historical entity that extends beyond the temporary life of any individual. According to John Holmwood, Human beings are social animals and organize their activities in groups. The term "society" is used to describe a level of organization of groups that is relatively self-contained. However, the boundedness of groups is always relative and so sociologists may refer to human society, where the reference is to the interdependencies among all social groups, or to subgroups such as family society, where the reference is to the typical interactions among the individuals making up a grouping of close kin. Equally the term "society" may be used to indicate the wider activities of those under the authority of a particular state, for example, Indian society, British society, French society or German society. The term "society" came into usage in the 18th century with the rise of European modernity and its distinctive public sphere of civil society and state. The relative openness of association and the range of cultivated activities available created a space for social servant. These structures are seen as timeless, and are usually ascribed to the creative interventions of higher divinity. With the onset of modernity – ushering in of the Industrial Revolution, emergence of modern science and critical thinking, such notions dramatically changed. People are presented as individuals who can choose which role they play and change from one role to another. Structures seemingly dissolve into agency, so that what matters is the will of individuals to alter the world in which they find themselves. The problem with this position is that not only is agency presented abstractly – that is, as outside society – but the same abstract force that enables some to be actors condemns others to passivity. Hence the classical liberals limited their notion of the individual to men who owned property, were Protestants (in the West) and upper castes (in India), and had the correct ethnicity. Timeless structures had not disappeared – they were merely assigned to others. Embodied structures are found in the habits and skills that are inscribed in human bodies and minds and that allow them to produce, reproduce, and transform institutional structures and relational structures – norms, values, interests, procedures and social interaction. The emphasis upon agency and the individual is important, but it needs to be linked dynamically and historically to the notion of structure. People became conscious actors not simply because they had changed their ideas, but because they acquired through

the market the wealth that enabled them to command the services of others. They may have imagined that social structures simply affected others – women, the poor, backward castes, the residents of the colonies, and so forth. But this is an illusion. The market is itself a social structure and, as such, dictates to beneficiaries and victims alike how they are to conduct themselves. Social structures are the product of agency. Without conscious action, there would be no structures. But what makes a practice structural is that the patterning which results has implications and imposes constraints that correspond only imperfectly to the intentions of those who created them. The structural argument that people enter social relations independent of their will cannot mean that these relations are the product of automatons – creatures without intention and purpose. What it means is that the result of activities undertaken is never the same as the intention of those who undertook these activities; it is this gap between intention and consequence that creates the structural character of activity. It is not that these structures are brought about by the will of some higher power, but human activity in which intention and result hardly coincide. Being aware of this makes it possible to try and organize our activities with greater consideration of their likely consequences. It is, however, a mistake to imagine that any society, no matter how enlightened and well regulated, can extinguish the gulf between intention and result, since the fallibility of humans and the complexity of social practices make it inevitable that agency and structure will remain distinct.

Structure

(Structure refers to any recurring pattern of social behaviour; or, more specifically, to the ordered interrelationships between the different elements of a social system or society.) Social structure is generally agreed to be one of the most important but also most elusive concepts in the social sciences (Sewell 1992). It is sometimes used rather loosely to refer to any observable „pattern“ in social activities, and empirical researchers, for example, have referred to statistical distributions of occupations and employment as disclosing the social structure of a society. More typically, however, it is seen as designating the actual arrangement of individuals and groups into those larger entities that Durkheim saw as social facts. The term, „structure“ originated as an application of ideas from biology, where the structure of an organism is the anatomical arrangement of its various organs. Social systems were seen as organized around „institutional“ arrangement of individuals that defined their actual relations to each other. Most expounded in structural functionalism, the institutions of a society are clusters of norms and meanings, drawn from the culture, that define the expectations that people hold about each other’s behaviour. It is through these expectations that specific roles and reciprocal role relationships are defined. Social Structure A social structure does not, however, consist only of such institutional connections. People act upon the institutionalized role expectations and so come into definite and recurrent relations with each other. Although there is rarely a perfect correspondence between institutionalized expectations and actual social relations, the term, „social structure“ designates this crucial combination of institutions and relations as constituting the „anatomy“ of a society. (Social structure, then, comprises both „institutional structure“ and „relational structure“. Unlike the structure of a building or an organism, a social structure is not directly visible. It is evidenced through observable movements and actions of individuals,) but it cannot be reduced to these. (The core

institutional norms and meanings are cultural phenomena that exist only as shared ideas and representations in the minds of individuals. For this reason, socialization into a culture is central to the maintenance of a social structure. The product of human agency, social structures express the fact that what people intend should never be confused with what results. Premodern thought is basically structural in character. (People act through social roles that determine their action, and great stress is laid upon executing a particular role according to the norms governing it.) A male feudal lord is expected to act quite differently from, say, a female

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

The word *institution* conjures many different images: a stark building surrounded by a high metal fence; a town hall; a church; the building that houses the college president's office. (To sociologists, however, an institution isn't a building; an institution is what goes on inside the building. An institution is a set of norms (surrounding the) carrying out (of a) function necessary for the survival of a society.)

(People in every society must fulfill certain functions in order to survive) They must set up processes for rearing and educating children. They must develop a system for maintaining order and managing relations with other societies. They must agree on methods for producing and exchanging goods and services. Societies differ in how they carry out these functions, but they all must somehow accomplish the same tasks in order to survive as a social unit. Institutions may seem abstract, but they are part of a world that is very real.

1. Economy

The economy is the institution that provides for the production and distribution of goods and services, which people in every society need. Sometimes they can provide these things for themselves, and sometimes they rely on others to provide them. When people rely on others for goods or services, they must have something to exchange, such as currency (in industrialized societies) or other goods or services (in nonindustrialized societies). The customs surrounding exchange and distribution of good and services shape societies in fundamental ways.

2. Government

[A government is an institution entrusted with making and enforcing the rules of a society as well as with regulating relations with other societies.] In order to be considered a government, a ruling body must be recognized as such by the people it purports to govern. A person or

group that considers itself the leading body of a society has no power if the members of the society do not recognize the person or group as such.

✓ Types of Governments

Most of the world's governments fall into one of four categories: monarchy, democracy, authoritarianism, or totalitarianism.

✓ Monarchy

Monarchy is a political system in which a representative from one family controls the government and power is passed on through that family from generation to generation. Most of the world's monarchies are constitutional monarchies, in which the reigning member of the royal family is the symbolic head of state but elected officials actually do the governing. Many European countries have constitutional monarchies.

*Example: Saudi Arabia is a monarchy. Until recently it was **an absolute monarchy**, meaning that the king had complete control of the country. The Saud royal family introduced a constitution in 1992.*

✓ Democracy

Democracy is a political system in which citizens periodically choose officials to run their government. INDIA

✓ Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is a political system that does not allow citizens to participate in government.

Example: Zimbabwe is controlled by an authoritarian leader whose human rights violations and disastrous economic policies have brought on international condemnation. However, not all authoritarian governments are outcasts. China has an authoritarian government, but it is a member of the World Trade Organization and a major player in international politics.

✓ 3. Family

The institution of **family** has three important functions:

- ✓ 1. To provide for the rearing of children
- ✓ 2. To provide a sense of identity or belonging among its members
- ✓ 3. To transmit culture between generations

In Western societies, we tend to think of a family as consisting of a mother, father, and children living under one roof: a **nuclear family**. Before societies modernize, families usually consist of several generations and branches of extended family living in the same dwelling, or in the same village. As modernization occurs, young people tend to move away from the villages in which they were raised in search of jobs, leaving the older generations behind. They relocate to cities and meet people they probably never would have met had they stayed home. People in modernized, urbanized societies meet spouses on their own, rather than being introduced by family members, and marry and settle down in locations that are often far from their original communities.

Marriage

Marriage, a foundation of family life, exists in all cultures, with some variations:

- ✓ **Endogamy:** Marriage between members of the same category, class, or group
- ✓ **Exogamy:** Marriage between members of different categories, classes, or groups
- ✓ **Monogamy:** Marriage between one man and one woman
- ✓ **Polygamy:** Marriage between one man and more than one woman

Pandanus to Dhavpadi **Polyandry:** Marriage between one woman and more than one man (*Tibetans in Nepal, China northern India*)

In some cultures, after marriage, a couple lives in the wife's family's household—a practice called **matrilocality**. When couples live in the husband's family's household, the practice is called **patriolocality**. If they go out and get their own place to live, they practice **neolocality**.

Divorce and Remarriage

Once taboo, divorce is now common in the United States. Many factors have contributed to the tenfold increase in the U.S. divorce rate over the past century. Women have become less economically dependent on men, which means they are now able to leave unhappy marriages.

and support themselves. ² Legal standards have also relaxed, making divorce easier to obtain. Because the divorce rate is so high, so is the rate of remarriage. U.S. society is still coming to terms with the ramifications of blended families, those composed of children and parents from both present and past marriages.

Child-Rearing

Rearing children is a primary function of a family. Being in a family provides children with a sense of identity. They learn the norms and values of their societies, as well as the norms and values of the smaller groups to which they belong. By learning about their cultural heritages, children gain a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves. By teaching children about their heritage, families insure their culture will live on.

Despite the many demands of child-rearing, most adults describe raising children as an important and fulfilling duty. Nevertheless, the number of children in the households of industrialized countries has been dwindling for generations. Economic pressures have led the average U.S. family to have only one or two children. Because both parents must often work outside the home to support the family, parents and children spend less and less time together.

Alternative Families

Not all families are centered on a married couple with children. To an increasing degree, U.S. households feature alternative types of families, such as the following:

- ✓ Single-parent household
- ✓ Cohabiting, unmarried couples
- ✓ Gay and lesbian couples
- ✓ Single adults

4.RELIGION

Religion is a social institution that answers questions and explains the seemingly inexplicable. Religion provides explanations for why things happen and demystifies the ideas

of birth and death. Religions based on the belief in a single deity are monotheistic. Those that encompass many deities are polytheistic.

Uniting Traditions

When families attend religious services or put up decorations in honor of a holiday, they are teaching their children about their religion and how to observe it. By engaging in these activities and traditions, children are united with others of the same religion around the world. In this way, families teach their own culture as well as the culture of the society at large.

Major World Religions

Most of the world subscribes to one of the following religions:

- **Christianity:** The most widespread world religion, Christianity derived from Judaism. It is based on the belief that Jesus Christ was the son of God and the redeemer of mankind. There are many different Christian denominations.
- **Islam:** Followers of Islam are called Muslims. Muslims believe that the true word of God was revealed to the prophet Muhammad around 570 A.D. God in Islam is the same god as the Christian and Judaic deity.
- **Judaism:** Judaism is a monotheistic religion that predates Christianity, built on the belief that they are the "chosen people" of God.
- **Hinduism:** Hinduism is the oldest major world religion, dominant in India. Hindus do not worship a single person or deity but rather are guided by a set of ancient cultural beliefs. They believe in the principle of karma, which is the wisdom or health of one's eternal soul. Karma can be strengthened with good acts and harmed by bad acts. Hindus believe that karma plays a role in reincarnation, a cycle of continuous rebirth through which, ideally, the soul can achieve spiritual perfection. The state of a person's karma determines in what form he or she will be reborn.
- **Buddhism:** Buddhists, most of whom live in Japan, Thailand, Cambodia, and Burma, follow the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, a spiritual teacher of the sixth century B.C.E. Buddhism, like Hinduism, does not feature any single all-powerful deity but teaches that by eschewing materialism, one can transcend the "illusion" of life and achieve enlightenment.

Types of Religious Groups

Sociologists group religious organizations into three categories: church, sect, and cult.

- A **church** is a religious group integrated with society.

Example: The Roman Catholic Church is well integrated in the society in Spain.

- A **sect** is a religious group that sets itself apart from society as a whole.

Example: The Amish of Pennsylvania are a classic sect. Though Christian, they choose to set themselves apart from the rest of society by their lifestyle, which eschews many aspects of modernity.

- A **cult** is a religious group that is outside standard cultural norms, typically centered around a charismatic leader.

5. EDUCATION

Every society has to prepare its young people for a place in adult life and teach them societal values through a process called **education**.

Function of Education

Education is an important agent of socialization and encourages social integration, especially in countries with diverse populations, such as the United States. Through their schools, students from a variety of cultural backgrounds come into contact with mainstream culture.

Unequal Education

The vast majority of the children in the United States attend public schools, but these schools are far from equal. Public schools located in affluent, predominantly white, suburban areas tend to have more modern facilities and smaller class sizes than schools in urban, less affluent areas, which means that economic status often determines the quality of education a student receives. Children whose parents are wealthy enough to send them to private school enjoy an even greater advantage. Studies show that graduates of private schools are more likely to finish college and get high-salary jobs than are graduates of public schools.

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

In every society there is existence of some sort of inequality based on income, occupation, education or hereditary status. Throughout history societies have used some system of classification such as kings and slaves, lords and serfs, rich and poor, landlords and labourers, upper and lower castes etc. (Social stratification refers to a system of structured inequality which rates and ranks members of a society based on select criteria and limits access to wealth, power, privileges and opportunities. It is not a classification of individuals based on their attributes but an established system of classifying groups. E.g. caste system in India.)

Raymond Murray defines social stratification as "horizontal division of society into higher and lower social units".

Gisbert defines social stratification as "division of society into permanent groups or categories linked with each other by the relationship of superiority and subordination".

There are 3 commonly recognized systems of stratification. They are estate, caste and class.

The **estate system** of stratification was part of the feudal system and prevalent in Europe during the middle ages. It is a closed system in which a person's social position is defined by law based land ownership, occupation and hereditary status. The estate system consisted of feudal lords, clergy, merchants and craftsman and serfs. Wealth was concentrated in the hands of the few who enjoyed hereditary status and prestige. On the whole the estate system involved a hierarchical order based on hereditary and social mobility was restricted.

The **caste system** represents a rigid form of stratification based on hereditary status, traditional occupation and restrictions on social relationships. Caste is hereditary, endogamous, usually localized group having traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes.

Caste as a traditional system has the following characteristics:

- a) Hierarchy
- b) Hereditary status
- c) Traditional occupation
- d) Endogamy
- e) Theory of pollution
- f) Restrictions on social interaction and access to opportunities
- g) Castes are localized groups

The caste system is in a hierarchical order with Brahmins at the top followed by the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. The dalits are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy outside the fourfold system. The status is ascribed determined by birth. In the old system every caste followed a certain occupation which was handed down from one generation to the next. Louis Dumont believes that the three characteristics of hierarchy, heredity and traditional occupation are linked by religious orientation. These are not strictly in terms of power relations or economic domination. Caste system follows endogamy where individuals marry within the caste and in the past intercaste marriages were forbidden. Relations between castes

were traditionally determined by the concepts of purity and pollution which asserted that lower castes are polluting to the higher castes. Lower castes were denied many opportunities such as access to public places, schools. Restrictions were placed on their movements as even their shadows used to be considered polluting. While the above characteristics are attributed to caste system in general, the ground reality states that the actual functional units are the subcastes. Ghurye (1932) believed that although it is the caste which is recognized by the society at large, it is the subcaste which is considered more relevant by the particular caste and the individual. However today with industrialization, urbanization and modernization traditional caste system has weakened though it is used very often to meet political ends

Class system refers to the classification of people based on their economic positions in society. Classes began to emerge as individuals started amassing wealth; social classes are not rigidly defined like estates and castes. It is an open system with increased social mobility. Though individuals born in wealthy families and influential families have better access to resources, class system is based more on achievement than birth; the status is achieved than ascribed. Sociologists rely on income, wealth, level of education, type of occupation, material possession and lifestyle to classify people into classes.

Stratification can also be based on gender. Historically women all across the globe have been accorded inferior position in comparison to men. Men have had and continue to have more physical and social power and status than women in the public sphere. Men hold public office, create laws and rules, define society and according to feminists also control women. Though strides have been made towards gender equality the position of women still remains inferior. Much of the inequalities in the public and private sphere are due to sexism- prejudice and discrimination because of gender. Fundamental to sexism is the assumption that men are superior to women. Sexism has negative consequences for women and has caused them to avoid pursuing successful careers typically described as masculine. Sexism produces inequality between the genders particularly in the form of discrimination. Inequality and discrimination is found in the areas of education, work and politics.

Gordon Marshal 'Dictionary of Sociology' defines age stratification as system of inequalities linked to age. It refers to the social ranking of individuals at different stages in their lives. Age stratification separates people into three primary groups according to their age: the young, the old and the rest. There is unequal distribution of wealth, power and privileges among people at different stages in the life course. In Western societies, for example, both the old and the young are perceived and treated as relatively incompetent and excluded from much social life. Age stratification based on ascribed status leads to inequality. Our society places an enormous value on a person's perceived age, with major handicaps given to the very young and to the very old. The very young are either not physically or mentally capable of performing the required task, and the same is true for the elderly. Since society requires that people be able to perform some level of productive activity, those that cannot are viewed as a burden on the system.

Functions of stratification:

- ✓ a) Stratification constitutes a means of society's getting some of its essential jobs done by distributing different amounts of prestige and privilege to various strata.
- ✓ b) It regulates and controls human relationships in society. Prescribed roles and role expectation norms and standards of behaviour are involved in relationships with each stratum. Stratification regulates and controls individual and group relationships and participation. Inequality of opportunity or non availability of facilities gives advantages to those in higher strata and deprives those belonging to the lower strata thus regulating participation.
- ✓ c) Stratification in society has strong integrative functions, serving to coordinate and harmonise units within the social structure.
- ✓ d) Stratification of society categorizes people into different strata simplifying his relations with other people.

4 BASIC PRINCIPLES

Social Stratification is a trait of society, not simply a reflection of individual differences.

It carries over from generation to generation.

It is universal but variable.

It involves not just inequality but beliefs as well.

UNIT 2

HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

Behavior is a response or a reaction of an individual or an activity in which the individual is engaged in. It is the result of a stimulus in the environment or an internal change. Behavior comprises the reactions and interactions of an organism to its environment and with other organisms. In a general sense, anything an organism does is behavior.

Types of Human Behavior

Human behavior is actually experienced during somebody's entire lifetime. It contains the way they behave based on various factors for example social norms, genetics, attitude and core faith. Behavior is afflicted by certain traits each and every individual has. The traits differ from one individual to another and can generate different behavior or actions from every person. Social norms additionally impact behavior. Human beings are expected to stick to certain rules in society those conditions the way in which people behave.

You can find different types of human behavior which are unacceptable or acceptable in various cultures and societies. Core faith could be perceived from the religion and philosophy of that person. It shapes the way in which a person thinks and this in change results in various human behaviors. Attitude could be defined as the level to which the individual has a unfavorable or favorable evaluation with the behavior in question. Your own attitude extremely reflects the behavior you may portray in certain situations. Thus, human being behavior is greatly affected by the attitudes we utilize on a regular basis. You can find three types of behaviors: aggressive behavior, passive behavior and assertive behavior.

Human behaviour is conditioned by a set of genes inherited at the time of birth from both the parents. Ideally it ought to be equally balanced from both the Paternal and the Maternal side, albeit due to complex genetic phenomena such as dominance of traits, prepotency and pluripotency its external expression called the phenotypic character at times tends to be more towards one of the parents. This natural storehouse of genetic material carried by 23 pairs of chromosomes as DNA and the various permutations and combinations with which the DNA are arranged in effect determines the potential human behaviour.

However in reality this behavior conditioned by the genetic material is modified to a very large extent by the immediate environment in which the person develops and matures. Parental influences, early childhood experiences, peer pressures, influences of teachers are some of the apparent factors which modify a person's behavior at an early stage. This being the back drop determining an individual's behavior it is almost next to impossible to cite which factor gains precedence over the other, since different factors act almost simultaneously at any given situation to bring about the complex human behavior. Is it then

fair to conclude that this complex human behavior in any individual is difficult to predict/decipher? Far from it, despite all the negativities any seasoned politician is known for or attributed to I guess they have an uncanny understanding of the human behavior and by extension that of the community more than anybody else. This is one single virtue that any seasoned politician has or rather needs for his success as a politician.

One of the widely accepted theories that explain human behavior is the need based theory propounded by Abraham Maslow viz. basic needs, security needs, social needs and self actualization are cited as some of the reasons strongly controlling and influencing individual's behavior. Is it then fair to conclude that human behavior is a sum total of genetic influences coupled with early environmental interactions and experiences along with the need based actions as suggested in the above theory ?



Factors that affect development (Notes given earlier)

1. Genetics
2. Environment.

Nature refers to what a child has inherited genetically, from the parents (e.g. eye colour, appearance, etc). The influence of environment on the development of the child (e.g. liking for a type of music) is referred to as nurture. The earlier view of child development focused either entirely on nature or nurture. Many favored heredity, and believed that we are born with certain talents and personalities. These determine who we are and what we become. In the other view, the focus was on the role of environment. We learn to do things for which we get rewards (or praises) and do not do things for which we are punished (including disapproval from elders). Both views contained some truth but neither is complete. To understand the development of a person, we have to study the complex interaction between nature and nurture (or heredity and environment)

The Brain & the behavior

The nervous system, which includes the brain, is the most complex of all of the organs in the human body. Scientists have been wondering about, researching, and examining the nervous system to see how it works so efficiently. When we are concerned with the how's and whys of what people do, we need to start at the most basic biological level. The nervous system allows us to sense, perceive, and react in our environment. When we sense, perceive, and react to stimuli we offer what is known as a *response*. For example, if we go to the beach and smell the salty air, hear the waves crash in the ocean, and feel the sand beneath our toes, we are sensing and perceiving many different types of stimuli simultaneously. A response might be a sense of calmness or peace. *Receptors*, which are specialized cells, allow us to sense these stimuli. Our brain will then process this information and make sense of what we perceive. After we perceive the information, our brain tells us that we need to elicit a response. All of these processes take place within a matter of seconds and are coordinated and controlled by the central nervous system (CNS) and the peripheral nervous system (PNS). The CNS is composed of the brain and the spinal cord, and the PNS comprises the nerves that connect the brain and spinal cord to the rest of the body.

Factors affecting behaviour

Three factors affecting behaviour can be identified:

1. Predisposing factors
2. Enabling factors
3. Reinforcing factors.

1 Predisposing factors

Predisposing factors are those characteristics of a person or population that motivate behaviour *before* the occurrence of that behaviour. Peoples' knowledge, beliefs, values and attitudes are predisposing factors and always affect the way they behave. Predisposing factors are motivational factors subject to change through direct communication or education. All of these can be seen as targets for change in health promotion or other public health interventions. We will look at each of them in turn.

Knowledge

Knowledge is usually needed but is not enough on its own for individuals or groups to change their behaviour. At least some awareness of health needs and behaviour that would address that need is required. Usually, however, for behaviour change some additional motivation is required. For example, even if a mother knows in general about using oral

rehydration salts (ORS) when her child is dehydrated due to diarrhoea, she may need a reinforcing message from you before she will actually use them.

Beliefs

Beliefs are convictions that something is real or true. Statements of belief about health include such negative comments as, 'I don't believe that exercising daily will improve my health'. More positive health beliefs might include statements such as, 'If I use an insecticide treated bed net at night I will probably not get malaria.'

Often a potent motivator related to beliefs is fear. Fear combines an element of belief with an element of anxiety. The anxiety results from beliefs about the severity of the health threat and one's susceptibility to it, along with a feeling of hopelessness or helplessness to do anything about the threat.

Values

Values are the moral and ethical reasons or justifications that people use to justify their actions. They determine whether people consider various health-related behaviours to be right or wrong. Similar values tend to be held by people who share generation, geography, history or ethnicity. Values are considered to be more entrenched and thus less open to change than beliefs or attitudes. Of interest is the fact that people often hold conflicting values. For example, a teenage male may place a high value on living a long life; at the same time, he may engage in risky behaviours such as chewing khat and drinking alcohol. Health promotion programmes often seek to help people see the conflicts in their values, or between their values and their behaviour.

Attitudes

Attitudes are relatively constant feelings directed toward something or someone that contains a judgment about whether that something or someone is good or bad. Attitudes can always be categorised as positive or negative. For example, a woman may feel that using contraception is unacceptable. Attitudes differ from beliefs in that they always include some evaluation of the person, object or action.

Self-efficacy

The most important predisposing factor for self-regulating one's behaviour is seen to be **self-efficacy**, that is the person's perception of how successful he or she can be in performing a particular behaviour. Self-efficacy is learning why particular behaviours are harmful or helpful. It includes learning how to modify one's behaviour, which is a prerequisite for being able to undertake or maintain behaviours that are good for your health. Health education and behavioural change programmes help a person to bring the performance of a particular behaviour under his or her self-control.

2 Enabling factors

Enabling factors are factors that make it possible (or easier) for individuals or populations to change their behaviour or their environment. Enabling factors include resources, conditions of living, social support and the development of certain skills.

Among the factors that influence use of health services are two categories of enabling resources: community-enabling resources (health personnel and facilities must be available), and personal or family-enabling resources (people must know how to access and use the services and have the means to get to them).

Enabling factors refer to characteristics of the environment that facilitate or impede healthy behaviour. They also include the *skills* and *resources* required to attain a behaviour. For example enabling factors for a mother to give oral rehydration salts to her child with diarrhoea include having time, a suitable container and the salt solution itself.

Skills

A person or population may need to employ a number of skills to carry out all the tasks involved in changing their behaviour. For some positive health behaviours it might be necessary to learn new skills. For example if a breast feeding mother is not well trained on positioning and attachment of her baby she may have difficulty in properly breastfeeding her child. Similarly, if the mother is not well trained at a later stage on the preparation of complementary feeding, the child may not get the nutrition they require.

Healthcare resources

A number of healthcare resources may also need to be in place if an individual or population is to make and sustain a particular health-related behaviour change. The availability, accessibility and affordability of these resources may either enable or hinder undertaking a particular behaviour. For example, in a given health post the lack of availability of the family planning method of choice for a mother may discourage her from utilisation of the service in the future.

Changing behaviour may also be easier if other aspects of one's environment are supportive of that change. For example policy initiatives or even laws might be in place that create a positive atmosphere for change.

- From your experience as an educator or receiver of health education make a list of some of the enabling skills and enabling resources you have seen or experienced that support health education.
- Enabling factors make it possible (or easier) for individuals or populations to change their health-related behaviour. Enabling skills, of course, include making sure people know how to do things. We used the example of breast feeding but knowing about how to identify healthy food would be another, or how to recognise a dehydrated child. In regard to

resources we mentioned family planning facilities, but there are many others, such as facilities for the prevention of malaria, development of hygienic latrines and so on.

3 Reinforcing Factors

Reinforcing factors are the positive or negative influences or feedback from others that encourage or discourage health-related behaviour change. The most important reinforcing factors are usually related to social influences from family, peers, teachers or employers.

Social influence

Social influence is the positive or negative influence from those influential people around us that might encourage or discourage us from performing certain health-related behaviours. For example a mother who is planning to start family planning (FP) might be influenced by negative attitudes from her peer group and think, 'Most of my friends do not use FP methods and I may lose friends in the neighbourhood if I use the methods'. She might also be influenced by her family: 'My family members do not all support the idea of using FP methods, especially my husband and my mother-in-law. They would really be mad at me if I use FP'. She may also be aware that her community society or culture generally may not be supportive: 'Everyone in our community is against FP and it is seen as a sin in our society'.

An individual's behaviour and health-related decision making — such as choice of diet, condom use, quitting smoking and drinking, etc. — might very well be dependent on the social networks and organisations they relate to. Peer group, family, school (Figure 4.5) and workplace are all important influences when people make up their minds about their individual health-related behaviour.

- Choose either smoking or alcohol use among young men and think about some of the reinforcing factors, or reinforcing people, that might encourage them to stay smoking or give up smoking or alcohol.
- Reinforcing factors are the positive or negative influences or feedback from others that encourage or discourage the behaviour change. The most important reinforcers in a given community include family, peers, teachers and employers. In the case of young men, their own peer group may be the strongest reinforcer to stay smoking or using alcohol. They may think they look grown up, or that others will think they look childish if they don't smoke or drink a lot. But perhaps employers may say that it is not professional to smoke or teachers may say it is childish to smoke.

LEARNING

Learning is a change in behavior or in potential behavior that occurs as a result of experience. Learning occurs most rapidly on a schedule of *continuous* reinforcement

Learning is the process whereby an organism interacts with its environment and becomes changed by the experience so that its subsequent behaviour is modified.'

Most of our behaviours are acquired through the process of learning. Learning may be defined as a relatively durable change in behaviour due to experience. Thus, if the change in behaviour is temporary, or due to instinct or maturation, it is not learning. The key feature of learning is experience. Any change in behavior in the absence of practice or experience does not qualify as learning. For example the maturational changes in the child, like crawling, standing and walking at certain ages are not included in learning. Similarly, illness and drug induced temporary changes are not due to learning. To qualify as learning, a change in behaviour must be relatively enduring. Interestingly enough learning is not directly observable. It is often inferred from changes in the external behaviour. It is apparent in terms of improvement in the performance. You may recollect your own early childhood experiences when you were required to learn alphabets. In the beginning we make more errors. However, when we start practicing the errors decrease and a time comes when the behaviour becomes flawless. The decrement in the number of errors with increase in practice clearly indicates that learning is taking place. How Do We Learn? Learning helps us adapt to the surrounding environment. After living in a particular sociocultural environment for some time, we learn the norms of the society and all that is expected of us and become responsible citizen and members of family and work organization. All this is possible on account of learning. We use learning to acquire various types of skills. But the crucial question is how do we learn? Psychologists, on the basis of studies on human beings and on animals, have tried to explain the process of learning. They have identified some procedures that are used in the acquisition of simple as well as complex responses. The two basic types of learning are classical conditioning and operant or instrumental conditioning. In addition, we have observational learning, verbal learning, concept learning, and skill learning

Three Major Types of Learning

- 1) Learning through association - Classical Conditioning
- 2) Learning through consequences – Operant Conditioning
- 3) Learning through observation – Modeling/Observational Learning

Learning and memory involve a series of stages. Processes occurring during the presentation of the learning material are known as "encoding". This is the first stage. As a result of encoding, some information is stored within the memory system. Thus, storage is the second stage. The third, and final, stage is retrieval, which involves recovering or extracting stored information from the memory system.

Types of Memory

Memory actually takes many different forms. We know that when we store a memory, we are storing information. But, what that information is and how long we retain it determines what type of memory it is. The biggest categories of memory are short-term memory (or working memory) and long-term memory, based on the amount of time the memory is stored. Both can weaken due to age, or a variety of other reasons and clinical conditions that affect memory.

Memory Types

There are two major categories of memory: long-term memory and short-term memory. To learn more, choose from the options below.

1. Long Term memory

Long-term memory is our brain's system for storing, managing, and retrieving information.

Long-Term Memory

A long-term memory is anything you remember that happened more than a few minutes ago. Long-term memories can last for just a few days, or for many years.

Long-term memories aren't all of equal strength. Stronger memories enable you to recall an event, procedure, or fact on demand—for example, that Paris is the capital of France. Weaker memories often come to mind only through prompting or reminding.

Long-term memory isn't static, either. You do not imprint a memory and leave it as if untouched. Instead, you often revise the memory over time—perhaps by merging it with another memory or incorporating what others tell you about the memory. As a result, your memories are not strictly constant, and are not always reliable.

There are many different forms of long-term memories. These memories aren't formed and retained in a single part of the brain; instead, the process of creating and storing long-term memories is spread throughout multiple regions. The two major subdivisions are explicit memory and implicit memory. Explicit memories are those that you consciously remember, such as an event in your life or a particular fact. Implicit memories are those that you do without thinking about, like riding a bike—you once learned how, and you remembered how, but now do it without conscious thought. Although understanding these differences in the type of memory we carry for the long-term is helpful, the divisions are fluid: different forms of memory often mix and mingle. To learn more about the different types of long-term memory, view our [explicit \(declarative\) memory](#) and [implicit \(nondeclarative\) memory](#) pages.

How well you remember something depends, in part, on how quickly and clearly your senses take in the experience as it happens. If your brain records what you see, hear, feel,

taste, and smell with perfect precision, it can recall them better later. In many people with poorer memory, the fundamental problem lies in the brain's ability to record sensory information clearly—not its ability to “remember.”

2. Short Term memory

Closely related to “working” memory, short-term memory is the very short time that you keep something in mind before either dismissing it or transferring it to long-term memory.

Short-term memory—closely related to “working memory”—is like a receptionist for the brain. As one of two main memory types, short-term memory is responsible for storing information temporarily and determining if it will be dismissed or transferred on to long-term memory. Although it sounds complicated, this process takes your short-term memory less than a minute to complete. For example, it is helping you right now by storing information from the beginning of this sentence, so that you can make sense of the end of it. More recently, scientists have begun to dive a little deeper into “short-term” brain functions and have added a separate (but similar) type of memory, “working” memory.

Working Memory vs. Short-Term Memory

Working memory is a newer concept than short-term memory. The two are often used interchangeably; however, working memory emphasizes the brain's manipulation of information it receives (using it, storing it, and so on), while short-term memory is a more passive concept. Working memory is often thought of as the brain's “scratch pad” that keeps information – a number, name, or whatever else – on hand just long enough to use.

Age and Short-Term Memory

As we grow older, the amount of time our short-term memory can store information becomes shorter and shorter. Age, and other clinical conditions, makes us more likely to have trouble keeping up with certain tasks, like remembering which button to push in a bank's phone menu. It also gives our brains less time to successfully move new information to long-term memory, making us more likely to forget details of recent events. Incidence of memory lapse and cognitive decline are a normal part of aging. Although this is a normal part of aging, you can work towards slowing down the process by. However, you can work towards slowing down the process by maintaining a brain-healthy lifestyle and keeping your memory active.

Types of Long-Term Memory

As you would imagine, long-term memories are much more complex than short-term ones. We store different types of information (procedures, life experiences, language, etc.) with separate memory systems.

1. Explicit Memory

Explicit memory, or declarative memory, is a type of long-term memory requiring conscious thought. It's what most people have in mind when they think of a memory.

Explicit Memory

Explicit memory (also called "declarative memory") is one of the two major subdivisions of long-term memory. (The other is implicit memory.) Explicit memory requires conscious thought—such as recalling who came to dinner last night or naming animals that live in the rainforest. It's what most people have in mind when they think of "memory," and whether theirs is good or bad. Explicit memory is often associative; your brain links memories together. For example, when you think of a word or occasion, such as an automobile, your memory can bring up a whole host of associated memories—from carburetors to your commute to a family road trip to a thousand other things.

Episodic Memory

Episodic memory is one type of explicit memory. Episodic memory is autobiographical: it provides us with a crucial record of our personal experiences. It is our episodic memory that allows us to remember the trip we took to Vegas, what we had for dinner last night, who told us that our friend Maryann was pregnant. Any past event in which we played a part, and which we remember as an "episode" (a scene of events) is episodic. How well we record an episodic memory depends on several factors. For example, things that occur to us in emotionally charged conditions are often stronger memories. Most people remember where they were when they heard about the World Trade Center on 9/11, or the details of a wedding of a loved one, because those were highly emotional moments for them. Another important factor is the strength with which your brain records the memory when you first experience it. If you focus carefully, and your brain is able to process what you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel very quickly and accurately, the memory is recorded with more power, making it easier to recall later. This form of memory appears to be centered in the brain's hippocampus—with considerable help from the cerebral cortex. Read more about this type of autobiographical memory and take a test to see if your episodic memories center in the same time of life as the average person's.

Semantic Memory

Another type of explicit memory is semantic memory. It accounts for our "textbook learning" or general knowledge about the world. It's what enables us to say, without knowing exactly when and where we learned, that a zebra is a striped animal, or that Paris is the major city in France. Scientists aren't sure where semantic memory happens in the brain; some say in the hippocampus and related areas, while others think it's widely spread throughout the brain. As with episodic memory, semantic memory ranges from strong (recall) to weak (familiarity). Unlike episodic memory, semantic memory is better sustained over time. We are often able to retain a highly functioning semantic memory into our 60's—after which it undergoes a slow decline.

2. Implicit Memory

Implicit memory is a major form of long-term memory that does not require conscious thought. It allows you to do things by rote.

Implicit memory (also called "nondeclarative" memory) is a type of long-term memory that stands in contrast to explicit memory in that it doesn't require conscious thought. It allows

you to do things by rote. This memory isn't always easy to verbalize, since it flows effortlessly in our actions.

Procedural Memory

Procedural memory is the type of implicit memory that enables us to carry out commonly learned tasks without consciously thinking about them. It's our "how to" knowledge. Riding a bike, tying a shoe and washing dishes are all tasks that require procedural memory. Even what we think of as "natural" tasks, such as walking, require procedural memory. Though we can do such tasks fairly easily, it's often hard to verbalize exactly how we do them. Procedural memory likely uses a different part of the brain than episodic memory—with brain injuries, you can lose one ability without losing the other. That's why a person who has experienced amnesia and forgets much about his or her personal life often retains procedural memory: how to use a fork or drive a car, for example.

Priming

Implicit memory can also come about from priming. You are "primed" by your experiences; if you have heard something very recently, or many more times than another thing, you are primed to recall it more quickly. For instance, if you were asked to name an American city that starts with the letters "Ch," you would most likely answer Chicago, unless you have a close personal connection to or recent experience with another "Ch" city (Charlotte, Cheyenne, Charleston...) because you've heard about Chicago more often. In the brain, the neural pathways representing things we have experienced more often are more salient than those for things with which we have fewer experiences. As with short-term memory, long-term memory can weaken with age or with cognitive conditions. For example, it can be harder to complete a procedure that was previously quite easy for you. You might forget a step to baking a cake you've baked a hundred times, and that you thought you had firmly committed to memory.

3. Autobiographical Memory

Most of us have one part of life that we remember better than others. Find out if you have a "memory bump"!

From the moment of birth, each of us is exposed to a world full of sensations and information. All of these experiences—first kisses, soft summer breezes, familiar places, sad farewell—have the potential to end up as autobiographical memories.

Scientists have long been interested in understanding what we remember about our past and why we remember it. But figuring out a way to study autobiographical memory presents a problem.

Many other kinds of memory are tested in the laboratory using experiments planned out in painstaking detail. That doesn't work so well for autobiographical "episodic" memories, which are made over time and everywhere along the way.

The 19th century English psychologist Sir Francis Galton pioneered a simple method to study autobiographical memory, a modified version of which is still used today. He decided

to go fishing, as it were, for memories associated with a list of common everyday words. Four times he threw out his net of words, using the same cues to try and catch his recollections.

One of Galton's findings was that it was difficult to pinpoint when the events he remembered had occurred. Another was that his brain often produced the same associations over and over again. "This shows much less variety in the mental stock of ideas than I had expected," he wrote, "and makes us feel that the roadways of our minds are worn into very deep ruts."

In the 1970s, researchers modified Galton's cue word method and used it to study the distribution of autobiographical memories over time. They found that the college students they tested reported many more memories from the recent than the distant past, supporting the "power law of forgetting." The law, based on numerous studies of other types of memory, predicts that most information will be forgotten shortly after being learned. In fact, a graph of the relationship between forgetting and time would resemble a steep slide. The rate of forgetting does level off eventually, according to the law, leaving a small but stable core of knowledge.

As life expectancy continued to increase and interest in understanding age-related changes in cognition grew, psychologists began studying autobiographical memories reported by middle aged and older people. Imagine their surprise when, instead of a steep slide, what they found was something that resembled a bumpy roller coaster.

The roller coaster began with a five-year period of "childhood amnesia," during which few autobiographical memories were reported, and ended with a sharp incline of memories, corresponding to the most recent past.

What wasn't expected was the sizable "bump" of memories from adolescence and young adulthood. And that unlike many other kinds of memory, which change with age, the availability of large numbers of memories from the bump years appears to remain constant for healthy adults into their 90s.

Researchers would like to explain the "bump," but haven't been able to agree on what accounts for it. One discredited theory says the bump, or "reminiscence effect," simply reflects brain functioning, that the reason so many memories are recalled from these years is because that's when the brain is working best. Another says it's because many events are new and exciting to people when they are so young, and because there's less chance for other, similar experiences to interfere with how well things are learned or remembered. A third theory suggests that people establish a narrative about who they are based on experiences in their teens and twenties, and that fewer new memories need to be incorporated into that narrative once their identity has been established.

What's clear is that we have many reasons for remembering our past.

Sometimes we intentionally reminisce, for example when we want to share old stories with friends and family. The retelling of the past in social settings is an intricate dance taught to children early in life.

Some events are so surprising and important that they become flashbulb memories. For example, many people can remember exactly where they were when they heard the news John F. Kennedy was shot, that man had set foot on the moon, or that airplanes hit the World Trade Center.

On other occasions the memories pop up out of the blue, summoned by something as fleeting as a familiar feeling. "(T)he smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us," is how the French novelist Marcel Proust described it.

Studies have also shown that autobiographical memories aren't necessarily accurate, that they are creative constructions that may change over time to keep up with new circumstances. And that illness or trauma can affect the ability to recall who participated in remembered events, the details of the events, and the life periods in which they occurred.

4. Memory & Morpheus

Researchers have come to believe slumber actively helps our brains consolidate what we learn and remember. Can sleep hurt or help memory?

Many researchers might disagree with Shakespeare's suggestion that sleep, "Nature's soft nurse," steeps the senses in forgetfulness. Instead, they have come to believe slumber actively helps our brains consolidate what we learn and remember.

To be clear, not all researchers agree on sleep's role in memory consolidation. But the research in favor of the power of sleep may be mounting.

Sleep rhythms

Experts distinguish between two broad categories of sleep based, in part, on brain wave patterns measurable using the electroencephalogram (EEG). Delta waves, the slowest rhythm of all brain waves, predominate during the deepest part of non-rapid eye movement (non-REM) sleep. Meanwhile REM sleep, the kind of sleep most often associated with dreaming, is characterized by bursts of rapid eye movement. Over the course of a good night's sleep, non-REM and REM sleep alternate cyclically.

Sleep and memory

While non-REM and REM sleep are both critical for cognitive functioning, they may be important in the encoding and consolidation of different kinds of memories. Non-REM sleep may be particularly significant for declarative memory, our ability to recall the kind of fact-based information we might be tested on in school. Meanwhile, REM sleep has been associated with procedural memory for how to do things like riding a bicycle or learning a new dance step.

Studies suggest depriving people of an adequate amount of sleep hampers their ability to learn new information. For example, researchers at Harvard Medical School found that a night of sleep deprivation reduces activity in the hippocampus, which results in poorer memory retention.

And, sleeping after something has been learned appears to help the brain consolidate new information in long-term memory. In one of their sleep studies, researcher Kenichi Kuriyama and his colleagues (also at Harvard Medical School) had participants get a night's rest after doing a finger-tapping task on a computer keyboard for 12 minutes. They found that the participants' performance significantly improved the following day on parts of the task that had been most difficult for them.

Do naps count?

The benefits of napping are also being investigated. In another study, the Harvard Medical School researchers found that people who napped for 60 to 90 minutes after learning the finger tapping task improved, while those who stayed awake didn't. However, the nappers' advantage disappeared overnight, once those who'd stayed awake were given a chance to catch some shut eye.

Sleeping, age, and memory

Experts agree that most people need seven or eight hours sleep to feel fully rested.

Unfortunately, the ability to fall and stay asleep is often a casualty of aging. Reports of sleeplessness begin to increase in the 30s. And as the years pass, adults tend to spend more and more hours lying in bed waiting for the sandman. By age 60, getting a solid uninterrupted night of sleep can be a cause for celebration.

According to surveys, more than 30% of adults over the age of 60 say they have trouble sleeping and, not surprisingly, sleep-deprived older adults account for a disproportionate share of the prescriptions doctors write for sleeping medications.

The fact that aging is associated with changes in both memory and sleep hasn't gone unnoticed. Researchers are investigating whether age-related declines and slowing in memory performance are associated with increased rates of insomnia and changes in sleep patterns among older age groups. There is some preliminary evidence that the two are related.

How to get a good night's sleep

Here are some tips from the experts for getting a good night's sleep:

- Fitness seems to help regulate sleep, so stay committed to your exercise program.
- Do not drink alcohol, coffee, cola, and tea after 7pm or 8pm.
- Drink a glass of warm milk at bedtime.