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## UNIT 4 SELF IN SOCIAL CONTEXT\*

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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Define and describe culture;
- Explain the difference between enculturation and acculturation;
- Explain the agents that influence enculturation of an individual to their society;
- Differentiate between individualist and collectivist societies;
- Comprehend in-group identification, multicultural identities and intergroup bias;
- Explain how the dynamics of group membership varies across cultures; and
- Discuss the cultural influence on aggression, attribution, attraction, person perception and relationships.

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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Whenever we visit a foreign country, we find a number of differences between the lives and lifestyles of the people of that country and that of our own. The people of that country speak language that is different from ours. They eat foods that we generally do not eat. They express happiness and grief in ways that are not similar to ours. The type and nature of bonds and relationships they form in their societies and families are also unique to them. We often attribute such differences in the societies to the differences in their cultures. In this unit, you will come to know about the concept of culture, process of enculturation and acculturation as well as individualistic and collectivistic societies. By the end of the unit, you will also come to know about the cultural influences on individuals' perception and actions.

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## 4.2 CULTURE: MEANING AND DEFINITION

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The word *culture* is often used in common everyday language interchangeably with race, nationality, ethnicity, etc. The word *culture* is also used to indicate music, dance, art, food, clothing, rituals, traditions and larger heritage of a particular geographical area. Culture has also been a very essential area of study in many disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, political science, education, marketing and, certainly, psychology. All these disciplines view culture with different perspectives. After reviewing all these perspectives, Berry, Poortinga, Segall, and Dasen (1992) suggested six broader perspectives in which culture is understood. Descriptive perspective of culture emphasises the spectrum of activities or behaviours associated with a culture. Historical perspective helps in understanding the heritage and traditions associated with a group of people. Normative perspective describes the culture specific rules and norms. Psychological explanation of culture lays emphasis on learning, problem solving and other behavioural approaches associated with the culture. Structural perspective highlights the societal or organisational elements of a culture. And finally, genetic perspective discusses the genesis of a culture.

Thus, the word *culture* is a complex conceptualisation that helps us in understanding various activities, behaviours, events, structures, etc. in our lives. Reflecting its complexity, different researchers have defined culture in different ways. Some of these representative definitions are as given below:

Rohner (1984): Culture is *the totality of equivalent and complementary learned meanings maintained by a human population, or by identifiable segments of a population, and transmitted from one generation to the next.*

Triandis (1972): Culture includes some *objective aspects, such as tools*; and some *subjective aspects, such as words, shared beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, and values.*

Jahoda (1984): *Culture is a descriptive term that captures not only rules and meanings but also behaviours.*

Matsumoto and Juang (2008): *Culture is a dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival, involving attitudes, values, beliefs, norms, and behaviours, shared by a group but harboured*

*differently by each specific unit within the group, communicated across generations, relatively stable but with the potential to change across time.*

After viewing these definitions, it appears that Matsumoto and Juang (2008) have explained culture in much broader sense by encompassing all essential characteristics of other definitions. The definition describes the following components of culture:

- *Dynamic nature:* Culture is a dynamic system that describes the average, mainstream and representative tendencies in a given population. Culture cannot be taken as a definite guideline for the all behaviours of all persons in a given culture. There is always a certain amount of divergence between various behaviours of a single individual and also between behaviours of different persons and culture. This inconsistency leads to a dynamic tension within the culture and therefore, culture cannot be construed as static. However, the degree of culture may vary across cultures resulting into some cultures being exemplified as high on the degree of tension, whereas others may have lesser degree of tension.
- *System of rules:* Various behaviours, rules, attitudes, or values in a culture do not exist in isolation. Rather, culture refers to a system that involves a constellation of such apparently unrelated but functionally interrelated psychological components.
- *Groups and units:* There are different levels at which culture is reflected. When we take it in the perspective of individuals within groups, the units that reflect culture are specific individuals within the group. However, for a large group that is comprised of multiple smaller groups, various sections are the specific units reflecting the culture.
- *Ensuring survival of the group:* The system of rules that exists in a culture functions as a constraint on behaviour. Absence of the rules may lead to a situation of chaos. These rules help the smaller units within the group to coexist with one another by offering and promoting a structure for social order. The rules also promote balance between the needs and desires of the groups and units by taking the larger social context and the available resources into account.
- *Psychological and behavioural components:* Apart from the objective and tangible components (music, dance, art, food, clothing, etc.), culture is also constituted by the contents of the mind and psyche of the individuals living in the culture. Such subjective and non-material components of culture include attitudes, values, beliefs, ideas, norms, behaviours, etc. These components are shared across the culture and are expressed in voluntary behaviours, automatic responses and habits of the members, and overall, rituals followed in the culture.
- *Individual differences:* Different individuals in a particular culture vary in the degree they carry and follow the cultural values, attitudes, beliefs, norms, behaviours, etc. Therefore, in any culture there are individual differences in observance of cultural values, attitudes, beliefs, norms and behaviours or conformity to culture. However, some loose societies or cultures allow its members a greater amount of disagreements with the culture, whereas there

are some tight societies or cultures that largely disapprove or do not recognition individual differences within in the culture (Pelto, 1968).

- *Transmitted from one generation to the next:* Culture is not a fashion trend which is temporarily followed and practised by some people for some time and which gets vanished with time. Rather culture, comprising of the core aspects of the system of rules, is transmitted from one generation to the next and therefore, it is relatively stable over time.
- *Inevitable changes over time:* Although culture is believed to be relatively stable over time, it also undergoes some amount of inevitable changes. For example, in past 30 years Indian culture has witnessed radical changes driven by technological advancements. Culture is a complex system comprising of its interrelated components and units, and change in any of its components and units paves the way to change in the overall culture as a system.

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### 4.3 ENCULTURATION AND ACCULTURATION

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We witness numerous differences in the people of different cultures in terms of their values, attitudes, beliefs, norms, behaviours, music, dance, art, food and clothing. The reason for such differences lies in the process of socialisation they undergo in their distinct cultures. There are number of agencies of the culture, such as parents, peers, educational institutions, religious institutions, etc., that play a very important role in learning of various aspects of our own culture. The processes by which we learn, acquire and adopt various aspects of a culture are called as enculturation and acculturation. Enculturation refers to the process by which various aspects of our own culture are transmitted from one generation to the next by different agencies of the culture.

#### 4.3.1 Difference in Enculturation and Acculturation

Acculturation is slightly different from enculturation. Acculturation is the process by which a person adapts to, and in many cases adopts, a culture different from the one in which that person was originally enculturated. Thus, enculturation occurs in the culture where we are born and the process of familiarisation to the culture begins right after the birth. However, in the case of acculturation the influence of the culture other than our own starts only when we migrate to the other culture. Furthermore, enculturation is smooth and largely an involuntary, automatic and inevitable process. But the process of acculturation often encounters conflicts between the existing cultural learning and the new cultural practices and manners the person is exposed to.

#### 4.3.2 Agents of Enculturation

As construed, culture is transmitted from one generation to the next. This transmission process of various components of culture is carried out and facilitated by various agents of the culture, such as parents and basic family, peers, educational institutions, religious institutions, etc.

##### 4.3.2.1 Parents and Siblings

The earliest environmental impact on an infant's personality and her other psychological make-up comes from the *parents*. A hierarchy of three parental

goals was posited by LeVine (1977) that includes:

- i) The offspring's physical survival
- ii) Fostering of behaviours that promote self-sufficiency
- iii) Fostering of other cultural values, including morality.

The economic standing (even in the same society) of parents is an important determinant of the level of parental goal that they could pay attention to. A number of cross-cultural studies have been conducted in the past few decades in order to examine the similarities and differences in parenting behaviours across cultures. Similarities have been found in terms of developmental expectations (Solis-Camara & Fox, 1995), use of authority as a disciplinary measure (Papps, Walker, Trimboli, & Trimboli, 1995) and emphasis on higher power (McEvoy, Lee, O'Neill, Groisman, Roberts-Butelman, Dinghra, & Porder, 2005), among others.

Studies pertaining to cross-cultural differences in parenting indicate that these differences pertain to the particularities of the essence of *parental goals*. These studies have also examined that up to an extent various parenting styles lead to cultural differences on various psychological constructs. One such study (Conroy, Hess, Azuma, & Kashiwagi, 1980) examined the strategies employed by Japanese and American mothers in order to obtain compliance from their young children. Findings of the study indicated that in order to obtain compliance Japanese mothers largely relied upon personal and interpersonal ties, whereas American mothers were more oriented towards employing rewards and punishments. The Japanese mothers were more inclined to be involved in emotional appeals and exhibited greater flexibility as compared to the American mothers, who employed strategies based on their authority as mothers. Such differences on parenting clearly reflect broad cultural differences in patterns of enculturation and socialisation.

Cultural differences could also influence the type of involvement a parent would have as guided by the beliefs about their roles as parents and goals of parenting. LeVine et. al. (1996) observed an emphasis on interaction and active participation by American mothers (of Boston suburbs), and a focus on child-safety by Kenyan mothers (of Gusii region). This difference is thought to be a result of the difference in the perceived goals of parenting and enculturation.

The popular model introduced by Baumrind (1971) and added on by Maccoby and Martin (1983) describes four *parenting styles*:

- i) Authoritarian style (low in warmth, high in control)
- ii) Permissive style (high in warmth, low in control)
- iii) Authoritative style (high in warmth and control) and
- iv) Negligent style (low in warmth and control)

Out of these, authoritative parenting has often been recognised as the best style for optimal development of the child (Baumrind, 1967). However, the model that is theorised on the basis of European American participants may not sustain strongly across other cultures. The Chinese concept of *chiao shun* (or training) is a distinctive style of parenting that applied particularly to the parent-child relationship and children's outcomes in the culture (Chao, 1994). Stewart and colleagues (1999) distinguished Pakistani parenting from the traditional studies

on low-warmth Asian parenting styles, suggesting that the former is generally high on warmth. This could also be a result of different meanings that the parenting style components have across cultures. On similar lines, control may have a negative implication in one culture while children from another culture may perceive it positively. Acculturation, however, could modify these meanings. For examples, when Korean children migrate to countries such as Canada and the US, perceive the parental control negatively (Kim, 1992), although those living in Korea view the same positively (Rohner & Pettenfill, 1985).

Study on *maternal expectations* (Joshi & MacLean, 1997) of children revealed that Indian mothers generally had lower expectations of their children's developmental domains (expect for environmental independence) as compared to Japanese and British mothers. Japanese mothers demonstrated higher educational, self-care and environmental independence expectations of their children as compared to British mothers. Immigrant parents of Asian Indian origin avoid involving their children in part-time jobs as they consider them distractions from a good education, thus enforcing behaviours that they considered are required for a better education of their children (Hickey, 2006).

The difference in *sleeping arrangements* also highlights the difference in parenting behaviour across cultures. Matsumoto and Juang (2008) write about the negative attitude of many American parents toward co-sleeping with children; it is a trend for children to have separate rooms in families that are economically stable. Indian parents, and those in similar cultures, are often appalled by this practice as it appears to be neglectful. They prefer co-sleeping over "sleep training", especially during the infancy, so as to build a strong mother-child relationship (Isaac, Annie & Prashanth, 2014). Interestingly, communal sleeping was once common in pre-industrial Europe and America (Braun, 2017). Hence, perceived goals of parenting and thoughts on how to achieve them may change over time within a culture.

One's immediate family responsible for enculturation and socialisation also includes their *siblings*. A process of mutual socialisation between siblings is emphasised in research (e.g. Ernst & Angst, 1983). Siblings often pass on their set of beliefs and behaviours on to each other (Zukow-Goldring, 1995). In families having a large number of children, older siblings may take on the responsibilities of caregiving for their younger brothers and sisters (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008).

The impact of number of siblings in the growth of children manifested mixed results (Salem, 2006). Increased number of siblings led to increased chances of nutritional stunting. At the same time, older siblings act as protective factors against stunting of their younger brothers and sisters. However, according to a study by Desai (1995), smaller number of siblings did not provide any advantage if their remote village did not have a school. This highlights the point that enculturation agents do not work independently and sometimes only have an enhancing effect on factors affecting socialisation. Socialisation literature on street children of India (mostly Hindus and Muslims) indicates that their work life starts at a much younger age than the more privileged ones – around the age of 6 to 9 years (Mathur, 2009). Younger children in this category are often accompanied by their older siblings, thus being important agents of enculturation.

### 4.3.2.2 Extended Family

It takes a village to raise a child. Or in many non-European American cultures, it at least takes a larger family consisting of more than parents and their children. Karve (1965) describes a joint family as “a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked in one kitchen, who hold common property and participate in common family worship and are related to one another as some particular type of kinder” – ‘generally’ being the key term in this comprehensive definition. Many cultures view extended family as a source of passing on the cultural heritage to the later generations (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008).

Most Western studies, particularly on parenting styles, focus on the nuclear family and often on the child’s relationship with her mother. *Joint families* demonstrate important relationship dynamics with grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins almost as much as it does with the parents and siblings. Even in the US, grandmothers often get more connected into the family when their daughters are single mothers or teenage mothers (Garcia Coll, 1990).

Even after a process of acculturation and family nuclearisation after immigrating to Western countries such as the USA, Asian Indian Americans maintain the joint family values and etiquette (Hickey, 2006). Growing up in joint family produces a sense of belongingness in children; they tend to have abundant playmates and be endowed with limitless supply of love and warmth (Ghosh, 1983). This, in turn, reinforces loyalty to the family and respect for authority in Asian Indian children.

### 4.3.2.3 Peer Relations

A peer group consists of a small group of individuals who are passably close to friends, are of similar age group, and collectively engage in similar activities (Castrogiovanni, 2002). Since early childhood, children interact with others of their age who could be their potential playmates. In orphanages, children mostly interact with peers of several age groups, where the older children take responsibilities of the younger ones. The extent of interaction with peers may differ from culture to culture; Western and industrialised cultures seeing more interaction within peers than their Eastern counterparts. This extent determines the importance level of peer interaction for socialisation of individuals. Peer groups allow the individual to learn autonomy without adult involvement, coping strategies (Castrogiovanni, 2002), and identity construction/reconstruction (Black, 2002). According to Nicole M. Howard (2004), peers may reinforce family values but may also supplement problematic behaviours.

Children often interact with peers their own gender, creating disconnect from the other gender. This may carry forward later into adolescence and adulthood as these individuals are better socialised to and develop skills in interacting with members of their own sex and not enough skills for opposite sex interactions (Hanish & Fabes, 2014). A subsystem of peer relations is *friendship*. Youniss and Smollar (1989) theorised that close friendships serve functional benefits by facilitating the acquisition of social competencies such as interpersonal sensitivity, reciprocity, cooperation, and negotiation that are congruent to the culture.

Salman Akhtar (2009) investigated friendships of immigrant children in Western countries, providing important insights into the acculturation process. *Homo-ethnic friendships* (having friends of one's own ethnic group) serve maternal function of pacifying the individual but, on the negative side, impede one's individuation. *Hetero-ethnic friendships* (having friends belonging to ethnic groups other than one's own) play paternal role by bolstering the process of acculturation but tend to lack earnest affective connections. Having exclusively hetero-ethnic friends, or homo-ethnic friends results into slower psychological development of the person.

#### 4.3.2.4 Education

Recall that we mentioned about the positive effects of siblings on child development being conditional, depending on whether there was a school in the locality. Formal education and informal education become pivotal in the assimilation of individuals into the society by teaching culturally appropriate skills and values. John Dewey (1899, 1916) delineated the following roles of education relevant to the society:

- i) Culture Transmission
- ii) Minimising inequality
- iii) Social adaptability and social change
- iv) Acquisition of new knowledge
- v) Personal development

Cross-national studies of *mathematics achievement* and abilities show significant differences in the same. Geary (1996) assert that secondary, not primary, mathematical abilities manifest these differences. This would imply that the causal factors for such difference are cultural and social, not biological. American students tend to make more miscalculations as compared to East Asian students (Miura, Okamoto, Kim, Steere, & Fayol, 1993). This may be due to the language differences in numbers, in Japanese 1 to 10 have unique labels while all numbers henceforth are combination of these numbers (e.g. 11 is "ten-one") while in English, numbers 1 to 19 and decade numbers have unique labels.

Cultural differences in *teaching style* could also account for the differences in mathematical and other educational abilities. It was noted that as compared to the United States, Chinese and Japanese teachers spent greater time with students and the students spent greater time in the school in terms of days per day and hours per year. Some cultures majorly opt for a didactic teaching style, where teachers provide information to the students verbally and students acquire it as per their level of understanding and memorisation. Alternatively, other cultures majorly have more dynamic teachers who are actively involved with students, providing them with a platform where the students can themselves uncover concepts and theories of the workings of the world. American teaching system believes in praising the students on correct answers while Indian, Japanese and Taiwanese culture focus on correcting mistakes of the students.

Finally, of course, cultural differences are reflected in *course content* of an education system across nations and within nations as well. The structure, content and intent of a course could capably shape and modify the culture as well as political current in a society. A negative example of this is the study by Jamatia



and Gundimedda (2019) on the curriculum of schools in Tripura that encouraged marginalisation of multiple cultures, particularly tribal groups, in the state. They find that although Tripura is a state with people of multiple identities, the education system fails to represent them and, instead, perpetuates a monolithic identity, majorly representing Bengali Hindus by using Bengali as the administrative language and idealising the Hindu religion. Hence, education has a major role in shaping, fostering as well as transforming a culture and the society. However, this quality also calls for caution while designing and implementing course structure at different levels.

#### 4.3.2.5 Religion

For long, religion and education as entities were not separate. Religious advocates would impart values as well as education to children and educational institutes encouraged religiosity. The religious text of Judaism in ancient Israel, Torah, instructed and encouraged learning and literacy (Compayrei & Payne, 1899). The schools, however, only allowed boys. In 622 AD, schools were opened in the Islamic mosques in Medina (now in Saudi Arabia; Al-Hassani, 2011). Much earlier, between 1500 and 600 BC, Veda and other Hindu scriptures were the sources of education in ancient Indian that focused on teaching grammar, composition, verses, logic and other occupational skills (Gupta, 2007). Gurukulas were important institutions where Brahmin students studied under a Brahmin teacher for around twelve years before returning home. While they taught many life sustaining values, religion and its history dominated the system.

In modern time as well, depending on the level of religiosity in the culture and/or family, religion plays a major role in socialisation. For Punjabi parents settled in England, religious practices are important carriers of language and principles for the next generation (Dosanjh & Ghuman, 1997). Some religions celebrate the transition to adulthood of individuals by ceremonies such as the Bar Mitzvah in Judaism and to adolescence by Ramadan fasting participation in Islam. Religious belief has a strong link in moral development in Africa (Okonkwo, 1997) and suicide attitudes for Hindus and Muslims in England (Kamal & Lowenthal, 2002), among other linkages.

Fonerand Alba (2008) find that individuals that convert to Christianity in the United States have positive outcomes in the acculturation process. Already belonging to a religion of the majority where one migrates to also helped social mobility (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007). Stronger religiosity, however, negatively impacts assimilation in a new culture as they tend to prioritise their own cultures (Borup & Ahlin, 2011).

#### Self Assessment Questions I

##### Fill in the blanks:

- 1) A peer group consists of a ..... who are passably close to friends, are of similar age group, and collectively engage in similar activities.
- 2) Acculturation is the process by which a person .....
- 3) ..... occurs in the culture where we are born and the process of familiarisation to the culture begins right after the birth.

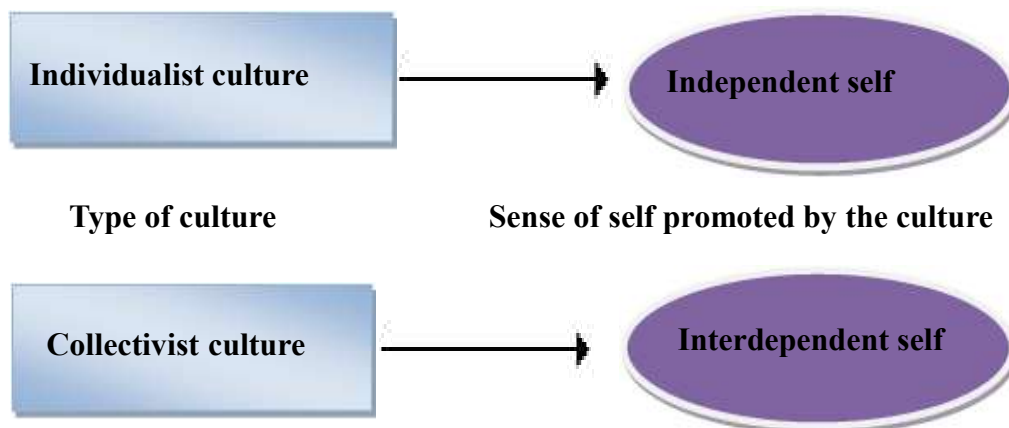
- 4) ..... is a dynamic system that describes the average, mainstream and representative tendencies in a given population.
- 5) The earliest environmental impact on an infant’s personality and her other psychological make-up comes from the .....

#### 4.4 SELF ACROSS CULTURES

One of the episodes of NPR’s Invisibilia podcast starts with a story of a woman named Karen Byrne whose left hand hits her without her volition or cognitive efforts, in a way that does not resemble an impulse or a tic. She suffers from a syndrome known as the Alien Hand Syndrome that emerged after the surgical removal of her corpus callosum (a collection of nerve fibres that connect the left cerebral hemisphere to the right) to control her epileptic seizures. This means that both her hemispheres work independently. According to her observations, the left hand hits her every time she does something normatively wrong – like using explicit language. It feels as if her left hand has a “mind of its own”. The episode that aired this story was aptly named “The Culture Inside”.

Culture does not just exist and stay limited to the society and the country we live in, but we become carriers of it, often perceiving and internalising events and concepts in context of our personal cultures. Our personal cultures are a part of our self-concepts. Wehrle and Fasbender (2019) defined self-concept as an integration of “complex, organised, and yet dynamic system of learned attitudes, beliefs, evaluative judgments that people hold about themselves.” Sense of self could be broadly categorised into (Markus & Kitayama, 1991):

- i) *Sense of Self in Individualist societies:* Generally prevalent in the Western societies, such as in the United States, an **independent sense of self** is an outcome of internalising independence values, where individuals are more self-focused in life. Individualist cultures encourage personal goals over group or collective goals, self-actualisation and “standing-out” over blending in. They promote individualistic or independent sense of selves in the members of its society. Individuals credit their own qualities, attributes and decisions for achievements. People in an individualist society have been found to have a broader radius of trust extending to who could be considered outgroup members (Hoorn, 2015).
- ii) *Sense of Self in Collectivist societies:* Eastern and other non-European cultures are generally thought to encourage a more interdependent lifestyle and goals, i.e. an **interdependent sense of self**. They value conformity and loyalty to the group. Members of the group are expected to maintain group cohesiveness and prioritise group interests over self interests (Hofstede, 2001). Hoorn (2015) found that in a collectivist society, individuals have a narrower trust radius and tend to be more discriminatory towards out-groups. They tend to withhold their trust for individuals of the in-group.



**Fig .4.1.: Types of culture and the sense of self they promote**

The boundaries of these categories, however, are not well-defined. A society does not have to be classified as one or the other. India has been majorly considered to be a collectivist society; however, further studies have found that it is highly situation-based (Tripathi, 1988). For example, in a 2001 study, students had a collectivist orientation when conversing with friends, bonding with family, and engaging with seniors. However, when personal issues and matters were made salient, they had an individualistic orientation (Sinha, Sinha, Verma, & Sinha 2001). Gender differences were found where Indian females had a higher collectivist orientation (Jha & Singh, 2011). This convoluted individualist-collectivist coexistence is possible in India because the Indian psyche has a high capacity to endure contradictions and discrepancies, thus, it becomes an individualist collective society (Sinha, 1988). Hence, an integration of both traditionally collectivist and western individualistic has been observed in the Indian population.

#### **4.4.1 Outcomes of Different Self-construals Across Cultures**

Matsumoto and Juang (2008) delineated cognitive, emotional, and motivational outcomes for the two different self construals that have been summarised in the table below (Table 8.1). They focused on 7 areas to draw comparisons between individualistic and collectivistic societies. These areas are self perception, social explanation, motivation to achieve, self-enhancement, social implication of emotion, Social implication and indigenous emotions, and happiness.

**Table 4.1: Summary of outcomes for individualistic and collectivistic self construals as described by Matsumoto and Juang (2008)**

<b>Areas</b>	<b>Outcomes for individualism</b>	<b>Outcomes for collectivism</b>
Self perception	Perceive selves in terms of internal characteristics: skills and personality traits.	Perceive selves in context of their social relations.
Social explanation	Assume individualism of others and attribute behaviours to dispositional factors, largely ignoring situational control.	Explain others' behaviours in context specific terms and tend to attribute them to situational factors.

Motivation to achieve	Desire to achieve connected to personal goals of striving for success. Achievement orientation unrelated to affiliation orientation.	Achievement orientation related to affiliation orientation, having social goals - others' expectations and obligations.
Self-enhancement	Explicit self-enhancement. Attribute personal successes to internal factors and failures to external factors (self-serving bias).	In explicit setting, display the opposite of self-serving bias. Implicit self-enhancement is found.
Social implication of emotion	Socially disengaged emotions: pride & supremacy (positive) caused by successes, and anger & frustration (negative) from shortcomings.	Socially engaged emotions: positive - affection and respect; negative - indebtedness and guilt.
Social implication and indigenous emotions	More personal/private facets of emotions are salient and fostered, although social undertone is present.	Certain unique, indigenous emotions related social and public facets of emotion are observed.
Happiness	Happiness or general "good feelings" associated more with socially disengaged emotions.	Happiness associated majorly with socially engaged emotions.

How one perceives oneself (*self perception*) is an important product of the culture they grow up in. Members of individualistic societies are able to view themselves consistently in different contexts on the basis of their perceived skills and personality traits. This becomes a more difficult task in Eastern societies, where self perception varies with context. Cross-cultural research on self concept reflects that Americans focused on more self-evaluative statements while Indians largely emphasised their social identity (Dhawan, Roseman, Naidu, Komilla, & Rettke, 1995).

*Social explanation* refers to one's understanding and attribution of others' behaviours. Heider (1958) postulated that people can attribute behaviours to either dispositional factors (actor's internal characteristics such as personality) or situational factors (external or environmental factors out of the actor's control). Members of individualist society tend to assume individualism of others and attribute behaviours to dispositional factors while collectivists have the opposite tendencies. For example, Indians are often unable to think in terms of abstract motives and tend to provide situational explanation for others' behaviours, while Americans tend to ignore these causes and focus on dispositional reasons (Miller, 1984).

Sagie, Elizur, and Yamauchi (1996) found that participants from collectivist societies, such as Japan, displayed lower personal achievement orientation as compared to those from individualistic societies, such as Hungary. Collective achievement tendencies were found to be higher in the former. The motivation

to achieve is also related to one's personal growth in individualist societies but in collective societies it tends to have social goals, such as obligatory feelings and filial piety. In cultures such as that of Turkey, *achievement motivation* follows both social and personal elements (Phalet & Claeys, 1993).

Aaker and Williams (1998) talk about ego-focused versus other-focused *emotions*. They explained that members of individualist societies (say, in the US) feel ego-focused emotions, such as pride and anger (also termed as socially disengaged emotions; Kitayama, Markus, and Kurokawa, 1993) more intensely. Alternatively, members of collectivist societies (say, in Japan) feel other-focused emotions, such as respect, friendliness (socially engaged emotions) more intensely. General and more universal emotions could be felt with different intensities, have different expressions, and vary in the context of social acceptance across cultures. For example, a study by Ogarkova, Soriano, and Gladkova (2016) explored anger metaphors in English, Spanish, Russian languages. English language displayed more intense, expressive and unmonitored version of anger, while also demonstrating higher tendency to experience and exhibit the same as compared to the other two languages. The causation of anger was found to be internal (or dispositional) as compared to situational, and more socially accepted in English.

Further, *indigenous emotions* that are unique to collectivist societies are also related to public facets. Such as *amae* (Doi, 1973) is an indigenous Japanese emotion that refers to the dependency on authority figures and yearning for their acceptance, benevolence, and indulgence. It is noteworthy; however, that Aaker and Williams found that other-focused emotional appeals worked much better in persuading members of individualist societies as compared to the use of self-focused emotional appeals, perhaps because of their novelty. The opposite was found in collectivist societies because of similar reasons.

Interestingly, *happiness* levels were found to be significantly greater in highly individualist societies as compared to collectivist societies (Suh & Oishi, 2002). The possible causes of this are the dependence of collectivist members on communal relationships for their subjective well-being (SWB), while there is a direct relationship of SWB with individual endeavours among individualist members (Ye, Ng, Lian; 2014; Suh & Oishi, 2002). In simple and redundant terms, socially engaged emotions are associated with happiness in collectivist societies, while socially disengaged emotions are associated with the latter in individualist societies.

#### 4.4.2 The Case of Multicultural Identities

Faster modes of transport and globalisation gave birth to an era where individuals were not confined to their original societies. This provided a great opportunity of direct intercultural exposure via tourism and migration. This exposure also allows one to pick up new languages, habits, and social etiquette. Especially in immigrants, a unicultural identity is not maintained as they take a leap into a different culture but also have ingrained the values and habits of the societies they were originally enculturated to. Children adopted into families of a different race or religion could also have multiple cultural identities.

To study multicultural identities, Hong, Morris and Benet-Martínez (2016) overviewed research at 3 levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and collective.

#### 4.4.2.1 At Intrapersonal Level

Competent identification with multiple cultures was found to have positive outcomes for adjustment in psychological as well as socio-cultural domains (Morris, Chiu, & Liu, 2015). Hong et. al. speculated that positive acculturation that would lead to such findings could be an outcome of internal factors (such as bilingual proficiency and strong social support) and external factors (such as state policies discouraging prejudice). Difference among bicultural individuals is seen in terms of i) *distance* or the perceived dissociation between the two cultures; ii) *conflict* (perceived) between the two cultures. Simply stated, low distance and low conflict leads to reduced anxiety within the bicultural individuals (Hirsh & Kang, 2015).

#### 4.4.2.2 At Interpersonal Level

Interpersonal level influences broadly refer to the identity that others focus on when encountering people of multicultural identities. Discrepancies in perceptions of self and others about one's identity would lead to difficulties (Wiley & Deaux, 2010; Sanchez, Shih & Wilton, 2014). People of multicultural identities often face non-acceptance or hesitations from other individuals belonging to the sub-ethnic groups they represent. This results in a lower self-esteem, sense of belongingness (Sanchez, 2010; Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009) and poorer academic performance (Mistry, Contreras, & Pufall-Jones, 2014). Individuals tackle discrimination due to their multicultural identities using *identity switching* and/or *identity redefinition*:

*Identity switching*: switching to or accentuating the less vulnerable or more positively viewed identity over others.

*Identity redefinition*: playing up positive attributes of the target identity so as to create positive associations and feel better about the said identity.

#### 4.4.2.3 At Collective Level

Two policies are discussed in the context of multicultural societies: multiculturalist policies and interculturalist policies:

*Multiculturalist policies* emphasise the preservation of the multiple cultures in their original essence pertaining to traditions and communities. Although it has positive outcomes for the self-esteem of individuals that have high identity to an ethnic minority (Verkuyten, 2009), it comes at a risk of reinforcing stereotypes (Gutiérrez & Unzueta, 2010).

*Interculturalist policies* are a result of dissatisfaction from multiculturalist policies as the latter could hamper national harmony (Reitz, Breton, Dion & Dion, 2009). Interculturalism encourages intergroup contact and flexibility of one's own cultural identity as impacted by the intercultural exposure. They believe that cultures have historically been fluid (Morris, Chiu & Liu, 2015), not rigid, as they were exposed to various cultures, technologies or other novelties.

Fill in the following Blanks:

- 1) India has been majorly considered to be a ..... society.
- 2) ..... refers to one's understanding and attribution of others' behaviours.
- 3) Our .....are a part of our self-concepts.
- 4) ..... encourages intergroup contact and flexibility of one's own cultural identity as impacted by the intercultural exposure.
- 5) Members of the group of ..... society are expected to maintain group cohesiveness and prioritise group interests over self-interests.

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## 4.5 SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACROSS CULTURES

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Several newspaper articles (e.g., Outlook Web Bureau, 2018), blogs, and forums debate and scrutinise littering behaviour of Indians – many believing that the same people that litter the streets in India become more well-behaved and conscientious about that behaviour when they visit another country. Consistencies or inconsistencies in behaviour depend on several social variables, in this case, perhaps, social acceptability of littering behaviour in India.

Culture has much control on how members of a society perceive, bond, or interact with each other as well as how they interact with the out-group. It would be functional to be familiar with the terms *in-group* and *out-group* at the onset of this section, as they would be used frequently throughout. Maslow (1968), in his hierarchical model of needs, mentions the *need for belongingness* as one of the important needs, feeling a sense of acceptance in and affiliation to a social group.

*In-groups*: The groups we identify with or feel that we belong to. For example, our religious community, nation, family, choir group, football team, etc.

*Out-groups*: The groups we do not identify with or feel some sense of belongingness to.

One generally has multiple in-groups. Some group memberships are more important to us than that of others (Bernstein, 2015). Also, some group memberships are salient than others and/or become more salient at a particular time as opposed to another time. For example, stereotypically, Asians are considered good at mathematics, while women are considered incompetent at the same. Being conscious of one's group stereotypes may often reinforce those stereotypes. Shih, Pittinsky, and Ambady (1999) wanted to find how Asian women would perform on a mathematical task when their Asian identity was made salient as compared to when they were reminded of their gender identity. The results indicated that making the Asian identity (the more "competent" identity) more salient enhanced the mathematical performance of the participants, while making the female identity more pronounced, hampered their performance. Mathematical performance, of course, is not a social behaviour, at least in this context. However, the example serves the function of understanding how group salience and existing perceptions about a group could affect our behaviour depending on the situation.

This section will take a gander at how culture can affect behaviour in the social milieu, exploring the topics of group interaction dynamics, person perceptions, individualist-collectivist differences, attribution, aggression, and close relationships.

### 4.5.1 Cross-cultural Differences in Dynamics of Group Membership

**Stability** of group memberships varies according to the culture – North Americans generally have more stable ingroup and outgroup memberships as compared to members of Asian culture (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008).

As indicated earlier in the Unit, collectivist cultures drew starker contrasts between their ingroup and outgroup members, and also experience greater intimacy with ingroup members as compared to their individualist counterparts (Triandis, 1988). The negative effect of this is reflected in the difficulties in communicating with outgroup members or strangers in collectivist cultures, such as Japan and Korea, and compared to that in individualist cultures, such as the United States (Gudykunst, Yoon, & Nishida, 1987). Also, the personalisation of **communication** with outgroups in collectivist cultures depends highly on situational factors, while situational demands do not play as important a role in individualist cultures pertaining to the same concern.

In relation to communication and **interaction** with their own members, collectivists (students from Hong Kong China) had more prolonged interaction with each other as compared to individualists (American students), however the former had fewer interactions in numbers (Wheeler, Reis, & Bond, 1989). Since collectivists belong to fewer ingroups than individualists, they compensate through increased commitment to their existing ingroups and have a greater sense of group identification/belongingness. Collectivists value cohesion and harmony because of which they tend to be more susceptible to social conformity (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008).

**Attachment** theory and styles by Ainsworth et. al. (1978) has been studied in group context (e.g. Rom & Mikulincer, 2003; DeMarco & Newheiser, 2018). In simple terms, group attachment anxiety is related to the insecurity of not being accepted in the in-group, while group attachment avoidance is characterised by trying to refraining from depending on their in-groups (in spite of feeling belongingness to the group). Anxious group member, hence, tend to manifest behaviours that would increase intimacy with their in-group, while avoidant group members prefer to maintain their distance from the in-group (Smith et. al., 1999). Behaviours that increase intimacy with the group may include (as defined in Matsumoto & Juang, 2008):

*Conformity*: adhering to real or perceived social pressure.

*Compliance*: explicitly (in behaviours manifested publicly) adhering to social pressure, although private beliefs may remain unchanged.

*Obedience*: complying following some direct instructions or commands from a person of authority.

*Cooperation*: group members' potential to work together to achieve a common goal.



DeMarco and Newheiser (2018) investigated the relationship between group attachment styles and investment in group. Expectedly, it was found that avoidant group attachment styles was related to lower group investment while anxious group attachment styles were related to higher group investment.

#### 4.5.2 In-group Identification versus In-group Bias

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) is based on the supposition that building identity in relation to social groups also strengthens and preserves one's self identity. The theory views intergroup conflict through the lens of and "as a function of group-based self-definitions" (Islam, 2014). In-group bias refers to the likelihood that one would favour their in-group and disfavour their out-group. Tajfel et. al. (1971) demonstrated using a minimal group paradigm that simply categorising people into abstract groups is enough for intergroup bias or in-group favouritism to emerge. They divided participants into two groups based on their accuracy/estimation level of number of dots flashed on a screen. When asked to allocate money to people (even when told that this would not affect how much money they would receive), the participants still chose to allocate more money to in-group members in absence of any personal gain or loss.

While many previous studies suggest that recategorising small groups into larger groups (for example, girls football team and boys football team into one school football team) would reduce intergroup bias (e.g., Gaertner et al., 1990), newer studies suggest the opposite effect (e.g., Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Turner, & Crisp, 2010). Turner and Crisp confirmed that strong in-group identification would predict intergroup bias after recategorisation into broader groups. They propose that the reason for this phenomenon could be an individual's need to distinguish oneself and do so by belonging to a positively valued group or viewing the group positively. If one's group is merged with other groups that are equivalent on some important factors, it would trigger the need for positive distinction further, thus, aggravating the intergroup conflict (Brown & Wade, 1987). This might be the reason why fascism is described a radical embodiment of nationalism, where (extreme) nationalism facilitates racism and violence (Turner, 1975, Peters, 2018).

#### 4.5.3 Attribution

Humans have a tendency to find reasons and explanations for their own and others' personalities/behaviours and events in their lives or in general. Such explanations are referred to as *attributions*. This could explain people's belief in astrology and the pleasure we derive from buzz feed personality quizzes. You could attribute your failure in examinations to the strict grading of the examiner or to the fever you had that made you underperform. These attributions could be true. You could attribute your car crashing into the vehicle in front to the other driver's sudden braking although it could be due to your own inability to maintain a distance from the vehicle in front. It could be one of the reasons why we hesitate to accept self-driving cars because in case of accidents, blaming someone gets overly complicated – you cannot have a verbal road rage battle with a machine as well as you can with an equally angry human driver.

**Box 4.1: Errors of Attribution**

People tend to attribute one's own negative behaviours (or failures) to external factors and positive behaviours (or successes) to internal factors, i.e. *self-serving bias* (Bradley, 1978; "I was late to the office because the traffic was unpredictable heavy"). On the other hand, they attribute most of others' behaviours to internal factors, i.e. *Fundamental attribution error* (FAE; Jones & Nisbett, 1971; "he was late to the office because he is a lazy person who does not take his career seriously").

Another attribution error is *defensive attribution*, which is people's propensity to blame victims for their suffering, for example attributing the cause of sexual assault of female survivors to everything other than the assaulter, and viewing hate crimes against people of black ethnicity as a result of their perceived aggression. According to Thornton (1984), this error serves a purpose for the individual by making him/her feel less vulnerable to becoming a victim of such transgressions. This is also explained by the *just world hypothesis* – a cognitive fallacy the world is fair and "good" people get rewarded, while only the "bad" people get punished so they deserve their misfortune.

Cross cultural studies indicate that cultural differences emerge in attributional styles throughout broad range of situations. While western researchers hypothesise that individuals only attribute their successes to internal factors, in a study by Moghaddam, Ditto and Taylor (1990), it was found that Indian females who immigrated to Canada attributed both their successes and failures to internal factors. Morris and Peng (1994) reviewed American and Chinese newspaper articles about murders and found that American newspapers attributed the cause of murder to the accused person's internal characteristics, while Chinese newspapers attributed it to situational factors (such as feeling isolated from the community).

**4.5.4 Aggression**

Aggression is an overt expression of anger through behaviours that inflict physical or psychological harm to another person. Besides genetic factors, environmental and cultural factors have influence on the overall perception, experience, and expression of aggression in a culture. In Finland, aggression is viewed as something one does to gain pleasure and, hence, it is considered more deviant as compared to Estonia, where aggression is considered a more normal means to achieve a goal (Terav & Keltikangas, 1998). Further, aggression is more socially acceptable and considered normal in Hong Kong (as compared to the United States), when there is a difference in authority levels of two people (Bond, Wan, Leong, & Giacalone, 1985).

Several factors are involved in determining this influence on aggression; some of them are outlined below (Bond, 2004):

- i) *Collectivist versus Individualist societies.* Individualism in culture has a strong initial influence on violence reduction before economic factors come in (Karstedt, 2001). Moreover, individualist societies do better economically, thereby, further reducing patterns of aggression and violence. Due to the social pressure of remaining loyal and committed to the in-group in

collectivist cultures, violence and aggression towards the out-group becomes more likely (Giddens, 1976; Inglehart, 1997). Further, aggression against women is higher in collectivist societies as they feel more pressured to stay in the abusive relationship (Vandello & Cohen, 2002).

- ii) *Economic situation.* Wealthier societies tend to have lower rates of homicides (Lim et al., 2005). More importantly, economic inequality, as compared to a country's wealth, is a better predictor of homicide rates (Kennedy, Kawachi, & Prothrow-Stith, 1996; Lim et al., 2005). Hence, equal distribution of wealth and resources are important for controlling aggression and violence in a society.
- iii) *War.* Involvement in war and other violent political feuds creates an environment of tension and aggression within a society. Countries that were involved in World War II (combatant countries), had higher homicide rates after the war was over, as compared to those that were not involved in the war (combatant countries; Archer and Gartner, 1984). Hence, being involved in an international conflict has a deep, negative impact on the internal functioning of a country.
- iv) *Democratic versus nondemocratic society.* Countries with stable democracies are less inclined to participate in wars (Rummel, 1988). They are more likely to honour freedom and human rights. This restricts the cause for homicides and aggression within the culture.

#### 4.5.5 Person Perception, Attraction, and Relationships

Individuals constantly evaluate others to form impressions of them, which are shaped and modified according to new information and several other factors. How we perceive people and their behaviours (*person perception*) is also heavily shaped by our own assumptions about the perceived person's inner state. Although introduced in the context of memory, *primacy effect* is also used in person perception to explain the tendency of individuals to overvalue first impressions of others (in spite of meeting them several times later) when making overall perception about them (Anderson, 1971). Noguchi, Kamada, and Shira (2013) find that American participants displayed primacy effect more strongly than Japanese participants. The latter were more responsive to ensuing information about information of people's behaviours.

Facial recognition studies indicate that individuals can more accurately recognise the face of people of their own ethnicities than others (e.g., Ng & Lindsay, 1994; Bothwell, Brigham, & Malpass, 1989). One of the explanations for this could be intergroup contact (or lack thereof), individuals tend to spend more time around people of their own race than others, hence getting used to and better distinguishers of facial features typical of that race.

*Interpersonal attraction*, love and relationships have been other interesting areas of study in cross-cultural research. Croucher, Austin, Fang, and Holody (2011) explored interpersonal attraction of Hindus and Muslims in India, and found that both the groups displayed greater attraction (in the physical, social, and task domains) towards their own religious group than for the other.

Attitudes about love were compared between the United States, Japan, and France

by Ting-Toomey (1991). It was found that love commitment and disclosure maintenance were rated much higher by American and French participants as compared to Japanese participants; and the Americans rated relational ambivalence higher than the Japanese. The domain of conflict expression was rated higher by Japanese and American participants over French subjects.

Although people tend to be attracted to their in-groups, much of the recent work demonstrates the benefits of developing close relationships with members of a different culture. For example, Lu and colleagues (2017) conducted a series of studies on the effect of intercultural relationships on creativity. Non-Americans who had worked in the US under J-1 visas who stayed in touch with their American friends were more innovative and had higher chances of becoming entrepreneurs. More importantly, people with intercultural dating experience had significantly higher levels of creativity than those with exclusive intracultural dating experience. Thus, long-term intercultural friendships and a history of intercultural romantic relationship have significant positive impact on people.

### Self Assessment Questions III

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

- 1) Aggression is an overt expression of anger through behaviours that inflict physical or psychological harm to another person. ( )
- 2) Self - serving bias is an attribution error in which people blame victims for their suffering. ( )
- 3) Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) is based on the supposition that building identity in relation to social groups also strengthens and preserves one’s self identity. ( )
- 4) Conformity refers to group members’ potential to work together to achieve a common goal. ( )
- 5) The groups we identify with or feel that we belong to are called ‘out- groups’. ( )

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## 4.6 LET US SUM UP

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Culture is an important determinant of how our perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours are shaped and moderated throughout our lives. Some agents that play important role in our enculturation are immediate family, extended family, friends, education, and religion. Their roles are different in individualist cultures that focus on developing an individual construal of sense and standing out, and in collectivist cultures, that focus on group harmony and fitting in. According to the type of culture one is brought up in, they generally display behaviours that are more valued and socially appropriate. One could have multiple cultural identities, where one becomes salient over others depending on the situation. The pitfall of in-group identification, however, could be intergroup bias which could restrict us from expanding our worldview through intergroup contact and also ingrain prejudices and discriminatory behaviour. While finding cultural differences, it is important to stay mindful of the many similarities that we may not talk about. Also, cultural differences are not hierarchical differences, i.e., they may not essentially make one culture better over the other.

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## 4.7 UNIT END QUESTIONS

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- 1) Explain the nature and meaning of enculturation and contrast it with acculturation.
- 2) Delineate and explain the major agents responsible for enculturating an individual to a society.
- 3) Illustrate, with examples, the role of immediate and extended family as well as peer relations in enculturation to different cultures.
- 4) What are the functions of education and religion? How do they influence socialisation of individuals?
- 5) How does the sense of self vary across individualist and collectivist cultures? Also describe the emotional, cognitive, and motivational outcomes for individualist and collectivist construals of self.
- 6) What do you understand by multicultural identity? Explain its dynamics at intrapersonal, interpersonal, and collective levels.
- 7) Describe the cross-cultural differences in dynamics of group membership.
- 8) Explain cultural differences in terms of attribution, aggression, person perception, and close relationships.

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## 4.8 GLOSSARY

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**Acculturation:** adapting to and/or adopting a culture different from the one in which that person was originally enculturated.

**Aggression:** overt expression of anger through behaviours that inflicts physical or psychological harm to another person.

**Attribution:** evaluative judgment to ascribe the reason/explanation for a particular event or behaviour as being caused or controlled by another person or situational factors.

**Co-sleeping:** when young children and their parents sleep in the same room.

**Collectivism:** political or cultural ideology that focuses on interdependent self and “fitting in” with the group.

**Compliance:** explicitly (in behaviours manifested publicly) adhering to social pressure, although private beliefs may remain unchanged.

**Conformity:** adhering to real or perceived social pressure.

**Cooperation:** group members’ potential to work together to achieve a common goal.

**Culture:** totality of equivalent and complementary learned meanings maintained by a human population, or by identifiable segments of a population, and transmitted from one generation to the next.

**Defensive attribution:** tendency to blame victims for their suffering.

**Enculturation:** transmission of aspects of our own culture from one generation to the next by different agencies of the culture.

**Fascism:** an anti-democratic political ideology that encourages extreme nationalism, denying fundamental rights to individuals of the out-group or that are considered deviants.

**Fundamental attribution error:** tendency to attribute others' behaviours to internal factors.

**Group attachment anxiety:** insecurity of not being accepted in the in-group.

**Group attachment avoidance:** refraining from depending on the in-group.

**Hetero-ethnic friendships:** Friendships with peers that belong to ethnic groups different to one's own.

**Homo-ethnic friendships:** Friendships with peers of one's own ethnicity.

**Identity redefinition:** playing up positive attributes of the target identity so as to create positive associations and feel better about the said identity.

**Identity switching:** switching to or accentuating the less vulnerable or more positively viewed identity over others.

**Individualism:** political or cultural ideology that focuses on independent self and "standing out" from a group.

**In-group:** the group we identify with or feel that we belong to.

**In-group bias/Intergroup bias/In-group favouritism:** the tendency to would favour one's in-group and disfavour the out-group.

**In-group identification:** identifying or feeling a sense of belongingness to one's in-group.

**In-group investment:** undertaking behaviours for group benefit over personal benefit.

**Interculturalist policies:** policies that encourage intergroup contact and flexibility of one's own cultural identity as impacted by the intercultural exposure.

**Just world hypothesis:** a cognitive fallacy the world is fair and "good" people get rewarded, while only the "bad" people get punished.

**Multicultural identities:** belonging to or identifying with more than one identity or culture.

**Multiculturalist policies:** policies that stress on preservation of the multiple cultures in their original essence pertaining to traditions and communities

**Obedience:**complying following some direct instructions or commands from a person of authority.

**Out-group:** the group we do not identify with or feel some sense of belongingness to.

**Person perception:** forming impressions of other and interacting with mental representations about people and their behaviours.

**Primacy effect:** tendency of individuals to overvalue first impressions of when making overall perception about them.

**Recategorisation:** redefining smaller in-groups by merging them into a larger in-group.

**Self-serving bias:** tendency to attribute one's own behaviour to external factors.

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## 4.9 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

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### Self Assessment Question I

- 1) small group of individuals
- 2) adapts to, and in many cases adopts a different culture.
- 3) Enculturation
- 4) Culture
- 5) parents

### Self Assessment Question II

- 1) Collectivist
- 2) Social explanation
- 3) personal cultures
- 4) Interculturalism
- 5) Collectivist

### Self Assessment Question III

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

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