INTRODUCTION:

Social psychology has recently gained a special status and importance in so far as it has been immensely contributing its specific research findings as well as knowledge and skills towards solving the current social issues of our country, most afflicted by varied problems of poverty, communal tensions, corruption, unemployment, population growth, old conservative social structure and family system, child-rearing practices, emotional stress, generational conflict and even outburst of new regional, religious and political groups or cliques and so on, generated by sudden, on-coming social change, technological advancement, progress in economy and education, impact of the West and political, democratic ideology in recent years. As a result, a vast number of research investigations have been carried on and are now-a-days being undertaken to study and analyse the nature of attitudes, factors contributing to the formation and modification of social attitudes and opinions, life-styles and moral values, process of communication, social influence, techniques of persuasion and propaganda for attitude and opinion change and so on, in order to cope-up with and search a possible solution or at least to mitigate the overpowering influence and spread of these problems in the society and the country at large.
One more such attempt has been made by the present author in this investigation to study and analyse the contribution of some socio-cultural factors to the formation of a few important social beliefs and attitudes of individuals and compare the results with reference to the beliefs or attitudes towards some current social issues as entertained by individuals at three generation levels, viz., the young adolescents (13-20 years), middle-aged parents (35 - 45 years) and old grandparents (above 60 years of age) in case of subjects, both sexes, belonging to varied castes, education and socio-economic levels as described and discussed in Part-I of Ch. IV of the main thesis. Of special importance in this investigation is the contribution of the study to compare and contrast the social beliefs and attitudes of the members belonging to the same families and of those from different families, i.e., all three generations of members in the same family (children, their own parents and grandparents) contrasted with respective generations of members as available from different families, matching mostly in age levels, thus enabling the investigator to examine also the influence of family atmosphere and environment or parental influence to the possible extent as a special case, as noted in Part-II of the Chapter-IV.

**Problem**

The investigator has planned his work to investigate the following problem:

"A comparative study of social beliefs as a function of some socio-cultural factors at three generation levels."
AIM AND OBJECTIVES

In other words, the investigator has undertaken to study the nature and extent of the social beliefs or relevant social attitudes of individuals towards some common, current social issues prevalent in the society, viz., (i) Caste System (CS), (ii) Social customs and Reforms (SR), (iii) Superstitious Beliefs (SB), (iv) Social ideals or moral Values (SV), and (v) most important problem, of current practice of Drug use or Abuse (DA) prevalent especially among the young generation and being the consequent concern of the elders. The investigator has aimed to examine some of the factors or influences contributing to the formation of these social beliefs or attitudes and has tried to relate their attitudes to some socio-cultural factors, such as, caste or community, socio-economic status and education level of the individuals entertaining such beliefs or attitudes i.e., to study the differences in extent of attitudes as a function of caste, socio-economic status and education. The inclusion of subjects of both sexes, comprising of members of three generations, viz., young adolescent (from about 13 to 20 years of age), middle-aged parents (of about 35 to 45 years of age), and old grandparents (of above 60 years) has been planned with a view to comparing the results on the basis of the contribution of sex and generation level to the extent of attitudes. In addition, the author has aimed to study the influence of family environment or parental influence, if possible, by analysing separately the data obtained from members of both sexes belonging to the three generations in the same family (as if in a
longitudinal study of subjects not remaining same over a vast range of age, but all remaining in same family) and those of similar generations from different families (as if in a cross-sectional study of groups of subjects matched on age but coming from varied families).

To be more specific, the study has been undertaken keeping in view the following objectives:

1. To study the extent of social beliefs and attitudes of individuals with respect to specific social issues named above,

2. To examine therein the contribution of three main socio-cultural factors, viz., caste, socio-economic status and education level of the subjects, along with the influence of two other main variables, viz., sex and generation level. To put it differently, the objective has been to study the significance of differences in the main as well as interaction effects of these five variables viz., (A) Generation level, (B) sex, (C) Caste, (D) Socio-economic status, and (E) Education level, and thereby to compare the contributions of different levels of each of these five variables,

3. To study at the same time the contribution of parental influence or family environment by comparing and contrasting the responses of subjects of three generations in the same family and those from three generations of different families (of similar age levels).
HYPOTHESES

In order to achieve the above aim and objectives of the study, the following specific hypotheses (either in form of null or alternate hypotheses) have been formulated and tested for significance through adequate statistical analysis:

(a) To study or test whether the three generation levels contribute differentially in the extent of social attitudes towards the issues under study; i.e., to study the differences in the social beliefs or attitudes among the three generation groups;

(b) To study or test whether sex variable contributes differentially in the formation of social attitudes, i.e., to study the sex differences in social attitudes of males and females;

(c) To study or test whether caste variable influences differentially the formation of social attitudes;

(d) To study or test whether the level of socio-economic status contributes differentially to the formation of attitudes towards social issues under study;

(e) To study or test whether education level influence the extent of formation of social attitudes;

(f) To study or test whether the three generation groups of the same family differ in their social attitudes from three generation groups of subjects belonging to different families (matching in age levels).
TYPES OF VARIABLES

As indicated and understood from the definition of the problem, generation level, sex, caste, socio-economic status, education level and sameness or otherwise of the family have been the independent variables whose effect or contribution to the formation of social attitudes has been studied. The dependent variables under study, are the social attitudes with respect to (i) Caste System, (ii) Social customs and Reforms, (iii) Superstitious Beliefs, (iv) Social ideals or moral Values, and (v) Drug Abuse. The extent of social beliefs or attitudes measured in the study has been the dependent variable. All other variables likely to influence the dependent variable have been assumed to be kept constant or have been supposed to be controlled variables through the process of randomization in the selection of subjects or through experimental design used in collection and statistical analysis of data.

SAMPLE

Sample consisted of 1800 subjects in all, distributed equally among each level of five main variables as well as in sub-level groups formed by different levels of these five variables arranged in a factorial design. These 1800 subjects were, however, unequally distributed between the two groups of sameness or otherwise of the family, arranged in a randomised group design as available. Special attempts have been made to include subject randomly and yet representatively from different groups as available and needed for the purpose of the study. Thus, initially high school pupils and college students forming the first generation of young adolescent group of 13 - 20 years
of age were included to serve as subjects for administration of the specially constructed Social Attitude Scale. These subjects included both boys and girls, from different high schools and colleges in Saurashtra, coming from both upper and lower castes, varying in their socio-economic status level. Later on, their own parents (second generation) and grandparents (third generation) of both sexes, thereby belonging to the same caste and SES level, were selected to serve as subjects for administration of same Social Attitude Scale. All these subjects of three generations were considered as members of the same family. Specific further care has also been taken to match these subjects in their level of education as far as possible according to the group under study. In case of less availability of subjects in the same family group, other parents (of about 30 - 45 years of age) and other grandparents (of about 60 years of age) were selected randomly from the different families in the society (i.e., not necessarily the parents or grandparents of the adolescents of first generation) to serve as subjects, matching in age, sex, caste, SES and education level corresponding to or parallel to sub-groups as needed to fit in the cells of the design for the purpose of the study. In short, special care has been taken to select subjects to fill in appropriately the various sub-groups in the cells of the experimental design used for the study.

TOOLS USED

A specially designed Social Attitude Scale (SAS) and Socio-Economic Status Scale (SES) (as shown in Appendix 8 & 4 respectively), both constructed by Professor A. S. Patel of Baroda
University were used respectively to measure social attitudes and SES level of subjects. The SAS consisted of a series of sections of sub-scales to measure variable of social attitudes towards different social issues, including the seven issues under the present study. This scale measured the attitudes towards social issues, viz., (i) caste system, (ii) social customs and reforms, (iii) superstitious beliefs, (iv) social or moral values, and (v) drug abuse, each section comprising of 10 items or attitude statements to be responded by the subjects on a continuum of five-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly dis-agree' i.e., from most favourable or desirable to most unfavourable or undesirable (as shown in Appendix - 3). The SES scale consisted of information items on eight aspects of socio-economic status, to be marked by the respondent and assessed on the basis of standard key formulated (as shown in Appendix - 4). The score on this scale indicated the three SES levels, viz., higher, middle and lower levels, of SES of subjects.

**EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN**

To study the main as well as interaction effects of the five main variables under study \((3 \times 2 \times 2 \times 3 \times 2)\) factorial experimental design has been used, representing three levels of generation \((A)\), two levels of sex \((B)\), two levels of caste \((C)\), three levels of socio-economic status \((D)\), and two levels of education \((E)\). Each cell consisted of 25 subjects, thus totalling 1800 subjects in all. In addition, \((3 \times 2 \times 2)\) factorial design has been also used to study the parental influence of two levels
of family data, viz., data of subjects from the same family and data from different families, for subjects of both sexes, belonging to three generations.

PROCEDURE

The investigator administered carefully and with all precautions both the scales, viz. SES and Social Attitude Scale to the subjects at different intervals of time. The subjects were initially administered the SES Scale (as shown in Appendix-1) and were classified into three categories, viz., higher SES, middle SES and lower SES on the basis of their scores or responses on SES Scale. They were asked to read carefully each statement of the scale and mark the adequate response on the separate answer sheets as per instructions given (as shown in appendix-3).

SCORING AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The responses of each subject have been scored as per special key meant for the scale (as shown in Appendix-4). These scores have been analysed by the adequate statistical techniques (F-test) of Analysis of Variance/in order to examine the overall significance of differences among different levels of variables or to study the main as well as interaction effects of the independent variables under study and subsequently also the Least Significant Difference (LSD) test (extension of double-tailed t-test) to compare any two means of groups or to examine the significance of differences in case of any two specific groups.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All the results of such statistical analysis have been presented adequately in the tables and charts or graphs interpreted adequately following the guidelines for amount of scores (as shown in appendix - 4), and discussed under appropriate heads in the main body of the thesis. All these data as summarised in various tables have been described and discussed under two parts, viz., Part-I meant for the main study of five main variables affecting attitudes, and Part-II devoted to study additionally direct parental or family influence over attitudes.

The thesis contains 5 chapters, viz. (1) Introduction, (2) Review of relevant past studies, (3) Problems and Methodology, (4) Results and discussion and (45) Summary, conclusions and implications. The thesis ends with relevant list of references and appendices.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

I. ISSUE OF CASTE SYSTEM & RESERVATION POLICY

A: Generation Gap influenced significantly the attitudes of subjects towards the issue of caste system and reservation policy. Grandparents showed most favourable attitude to casteism and least for reservation in case of backward caste members; and adolescents comparatively least favourable towards caste system and yet were favourable for reservation in case of the backward.
Sex was also a significant factor; females (more favourable towards the caste system) were more conservative than males in their attitudes, as usual.

The factor of caste itself was found to be significant; the backward caste members were themselves unexpectedly more in favour of caste system (or more conscious of their backwardness by special reservation policy), than the upper caste members.

Socio-Economic Status also affected significantly the attitudes towards caste system; the middle SES group was unexpectedly most conservative (in favour of caste system), the lower SES group was next in order and higher SES group was the least favourable to caste system, i.e., most reformist, as expected.

Level of education was also significantly influential over the formation of attitudes; the less educated (school level) group was found more conservative than the more educated (college level) group, as expected.

The family or parental influence was also a significant in affecting attitudes; members from different families were found to be more favourable (conservative) towards caste system, than members in the same family.

However, above inferences regarding main effects have to be interpreted with care & caution in view of most of or some
of significant interactions of different orders of these five
main variables as observed in the body of the main thesis.

II. ISSUE OF SOCIAL CUSTOMS AND REFORMS

A: Generation gap was significantly influencing the
attitudes towards social customs and reforms; adolescents were most favourable towards social reforms
(most reformist and least conservative); parents
next best and grand parents were most conservative,
all as expected.

B: Sex was a significant variable; unexpectedly but
significantly, being sufferers females were found more
reformist than males.

C: Caste also exerted significant influence; upper caste
members were more reformist than backward caste members,
as expected.

D: Socio-Economic Status also influenced the attitudes
significantly; lower SES group unexpectedly exhibited
most reformist attitude; higher SES group comparatively
the most conservative and middle SES group in between.

E: Education level was also a significant factor; least
expectedly the higher school level group was more
reformist than college level group.

F: Family influence was indeed a significant factor; members
from different families were observed to be more reformist
than members from the same family.
However, above inferences regarding main effects have to be interpreted with care and caution in view of most or some of significant interactions of different orders of these five variables as observed in the body of the main thesis.

III. ISSUE OF SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS

A: Generation level contributed significantly to the formation of attitudes towards superstitious beliefs; grandparents were found as usual most favourable to the superstitious beliefs; parents somewhat less and the younger generation had least faith in superstitions as expected.

B: Sex was a significantly influential factor in affecting superstitious beliefs; however, unexpectedly males were found to be more favourable in their attitudes towards superstitious beliefs than their counterpart females.

C: Caste also played a significant role in affecting attitudes; as usual, the backward caste members were more favourable towards superstitious beliefs than the upper caste members.

D: SES level was an influential factor; the low SES group was most conservative (favourable), middle SES group next best and higher SES group was least favourable, as expected.
E: Education level was an insignificant factor; level of education, whether high-school or college, made no difference in attitudes towards superstitious beliefs; both groups were equally superstitious.

F: Family influence was also not a significant factor; both groups — same or different families — were equally favourable (or unfavourable) in their attitudes.

However, above inferences regarding main effects have to be interpreted carefully and cautiously in view of significant interactions of different orders of these five factors.

IV. ISSUE OF SOCIAL VALUES

A: Generation Gap played a significant role in affecting new attitudes towards social values; grandparents, as usual, were most favourable in their attitudes towards social values; next in order the parents and comparatively the least favourable were the youngest.

B: Sex was also a significant factor; females were more favourable in upkeeping social values than males.

C: Caste factor was also a significant in shaping attitudes towards social values; upper caste members were more favourable than the backward towards social values.

D: Socio-economic status also influenced significantly the attitudes towards the social values; middle class group was most favourable (traditional) in their outlook.
towards social values; higher SES group was somehow next best and low SES group was found to be least favourable.

E : Education level was a significant factor; college group showed unusually more favourable attitudes towards social values or ideals than school going pupils. It shows the real influence of education in enhancing the social values, though the present system of education is showhow decried.

F : Family influence made no significant contribution; both groups were equally favourable (or unfavourable) in their attitudes towards social values.

However, above inferences regarding main effects have to be interpreted cautiously in view of some significant interactions of the main variables.

V. ISSUE OF DRUG ABUSE

A : Generation level was significantly influential in moulding attitudes towards the issue of drug abuse; grand parents held most unfavourable (conservative or negative) attitude towards using drugs, i.e., were most for prohibition; next in order against the use of drugs were parents and the adolescents were comparatively least unfavourable, i.e., were in favour of using drugs, as expected in modern times.
B: There were significant sex differences in attitudes towards drug abuse; as usual, the females were more negative towards the use of drugs than the males.

C: Caste was also found to be significantly shaping attitudes towards drug use or abuse; the upper caste group was more against the use of drugs than the backward group.

D: The variable of Socio-economic status was found to be overall insignificant, yet the further analysis showed that middle and low SES groups (though mutually and significantly not different) were more against use of drugs than the higher SES group.

E: Education level was found to be a significant factor; the school level group was found interestingly and curiously more favourable in their attitudes towards the use of drugs in comparison to college group that was found to be less favourable towards using drugs.

F: Finally, family influence was a significant variable in drug abuse; members from different families held more negative (unfavourable) attitude towards use of drugs than members from the same family, who were somehow comparatively more for the use of drugs (as if influenced by their own parents in the same family).

However, the above inferences have to be understood cautiously in view of some significant interactions of the main variables.
The findings of the present investigation would serve as very useful guidelines to the social workers, teachers, social welfare agencies and government machinery as well as all those dealing with the problems of social change, attitude development and attitude modification for the improvement of social conditions prevailing in the community by adopting a number of measures and strategies to solve the problems of the masses through varied techniques of persuasion and propaganda. A number of investigation still need be undertaken to examine the factors engendering the varied social problems. The present investigation would throw sufficient light on some of the problems and similar other investigations using more refined techniques for scientific control should be undertaken. It should be here noted that on the whole, in general, all the six variables investigated in the present study, viz., generation level, sex, caste, socio-economic status, education level and family or parental or environmental influences are contributing to or associated with or affecting or shaping significantly the social attitudes towards the various social issues under study. The statistical significance of these factors need not be interpreted as the main direct contributory factors in formation of attitudes towards these issues, but at the same time, it should be noted that these might be playing some role direct or indirect in shaping or reinforcing attitudes in association with other more direct influencing factors. Anyway, all care and precautions should be taken by social workers and government agencies dealing with social change and reforms or using varied
techniques of communication, suggestion, social influence, persuasion and propaganda tried out by social psychologists (Fishbein & Ajzen-1971, Muzaffer & Centriel-1945, A. S. Pafl-1958, ) to bring about some desired social change through modification of attitudes in the current times and present society afflicted by number of social problems. One has to take a note of attitudes entertained primarily by individuals in a society as well as of the factors associated with such attitude, before attempting to modify these attitudes in a socially desirable channel in order to improve or modernise the society.