

**CONFORMITY BIAS IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: EXPLORING
THE POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES OF
INCORPORATING “RESISTANCE” IN THE STEREOTYPE
THREAT FRAMEWORK**

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DECLARATION

I, Divya Padalia, hereby declare that this dissertation has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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Abstract

This dissertation applies the social identity perspective in understanding and conceptualizing resistance for social psychology. Two main goals guide the course of this dissertation. Firstly, an analysis of the “absence” of resistance is initiated by reviewing literature in the area of social psychology to show how even though explicitly absent, the discipline has addressed this concept, only the usage of terms have varied. The next major aim is to conceptualize the term resistance for social psychology. In doing so, the aid of other social science disciplines like sociology, political science and anthropology is taken. Chapter 2 highlights the classic studies’ emphasis (or not) on conformity. Several problems with how conformity has been understood are discussed and issues clarified. A section is devoted to the role of methodology in the proliferation of conformity research. Having developed a basis for an argument for resistance in this chapter, the next concerns with conceptualizing the term resistance for the discipline of social psychology. A review of studies on resistance in various social science disciplines is done to borrow their theorization of resistance; these studies are further analysed to see how other social science disciplines differ from social psychology in the level (individual, group, community or state) they use for analysis. Another point of difference highlighted is the trend in various disciplines to maintain or challenge the status quo. An attempt to conceptualize resistance for social psychology is done by recapitulating the classic studies and drawing a parallel between them and the recent studies that have revisited settings to these classics. With this conceptualization of resistance, Chapter 4 takes stereotype threat as a case in point and by first presenting and overview of the literature highlights the absence of a resistance paradigm in it. Stereotype threat theory is also critiqued on the basis of the fact that it lacks a firm conceptualization of the term stereotype itself. The problem highlighted here is that the connotation to the term stereotype is mostly negative. The social cognition and social identity approaches in studying stereotype is discussed. A last section in this chapter argues for an alternative meaning of stereotype, the implication of which may be the inclusion of a resistance framework to the study of stereotype threat. Finally, chapter 5 concludes the dissertation by reiterating the main arguments in the previous chapters and developing a conceptual framework based on the review and analysis that raises broad research questions for future empirical work.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Dissertation Overview

1.1 Introduction

As graduate students in the first semester of M.Phil., we were recommended a book in the social psychology class titled, *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do* (Steele, 2010), in which the author describes (almost autobiographically) a phenomenon called stereotype threat – defined as a process wherein identity contingencies work along with the situational predicaments to affect individuals from negatively stereotyped groups such that their performance is diminished. In simpler words, if an individual belonging to a negatively stereotyped group is placed in a situation which demands her/him to perform in a domain s/he identifies with, the risk of confirming that negative stereotype may in most cases lead him/her to perform poorly on that particular task.

Having read the book and developed an interest in it, a review of literature on stereotype threat and the psychology of academic achievement was in order. The review revealed that social psychology has for long grappled with the problem of explaining the persistent disparity between individuals on various measures of academic achievement. Accounts of the history of academic achievement literature point to the wide range of findings about factors that influence academic achievement. Explanations have varied from biological, psychological and situational factors. For instance, differences in brain structure and development is often cited as a possible factor in gender difference in achievement gap (Hanlon *et al.*, 1999). Similarly, Herrnstein and Murray (1994) in explaining the racial disparities in achievement advocated that genetic variation in levels of intelligence are at the root of the problem. Winne & Nesbit (2010) in their review of the psychology of academic achievement point to other factors that influence academic achievement and identify domains of psychology for the same; some of these are cognitive, metacognitive, motivational and contextual. These are broadly categorized as “things as they are” and “the way learners make things.”

Even though stereotype threat came along as a fresh perspective in moving away from the biological/genetic framework towards a socio-cognitive approach to understanding the gap in academic achievement, a majority of the data that has been produced only depicts what the stereotype threat situation entails and what mechanisms

are involved in it. Although a stream of research has been directed towards the question of 'how to reduce the effect of stereotype threat', answers remain only at the level of the individual, almost as if this 'situational' phenomenon cannot be tackled at the level of the group. This gives an inkling of the status quo-ist approach in mainstream psychology that has been pointed out by earlier theorists (e.g. Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997; Prilleltensky, 1989). It has been observed by previous critics that as social psychology has evolved as a discipline, it has been preoccupied with the psychology of oppression (Turner, 2006, as cited in Haslam & Reicher, 2011), and stereotype threat seems to be echoing the same understanding by displaying only one facet of the various responses that an effect of negative stereotypes could gather. Such an account of a social psychological perspective gives a lopsided understanding of the phenomenon. As this phenomenon is explained on the basis of a negative stereotyped identity that one acquires because of being member of a particular group, it is only fair that it be explained at the level of the group as well. Individuals as part of a group in society, respond to threat to their identity not simply in a manner of conforming to the 'timorous, meek, docile, timid' character that the group may hold. They may be equally capable of fighting back or resisting such negative stereotypes. As Reicher (2011) argues, there are two sides of group psychology – groups can dominate, denigrate, dehumanize and even destroy others. On the other hand, they can also challenge and destroy systems of inequality between groups. Unfortunately, studies on stereotype threat seem to have mostly disregarded the latter. While domination and the results of it on the subordinate group have been highlighted time and again, individual or group's ability to resist is prudently ignored. In effect, by overemphasizing the context, stereotype threat studies eliminate the power within the individual and group. In so doing, they promulgate the idea that people cannot resist the circumstances they face and all they are capable of is conforming.

This review of stereotype threat literature drew attention to the larger trend of such studies in the area of social psychology. It was found that the classic studies also propagated a 'conformist' image of the individual (e.g. Zimbardo, 1969; Sherif, 1935; Milgram, 1974). Few of these studies have been revisited by later researches only to find that not just conformity, but resistance behaviours did exist in these studies. They were either not observed deliberately, or the theorists just failed to acknowledge them. It was because of this obsession of psychology with a conforming individual in its studies that Moscovici (1976) termed it social psychology's 'conformity bias.' A great

part in conformity bias is played by naturalization of the social order and denying the existence of individual agency. This is exactly what can be seen from the results of Zimbardo's prison study, when the findings are explained by stating that security guard aggression was emitted simply as a 'natural' consequence of being in the uniform of a guard (Haney, 1973, as cited in Reicher & Haslam, 2006). This Stanford prison experiment (Zimbardo, 1971, as cited by Reicher & Haslam, 2006) has been recently revisited (Reicher & Haslam, 2006, 2012) and accused of conformity bias. While Zimbardo (1971) concentrated on how groups create tyranny, Reicher & Haslam (2006) show how groups also have a basis for resistance. As Reicher (2011) puts it, "We tend to favour explanations which assign certain characteristics to all human beings — characteristics which make us naturally suited to the world as it is and which reduce any alternative to a hopeless fantasy." In such a social psychology, the individual is portrayed as passive, having no say in defining their own condition. The need, therefore, is to move away such status quo-ist explanations of phenomenon occurring in society, of which power relations, social context, ideologies and culture form an integral part.

Taking cue from Reicher & Haslam's work and in light of other studies that depict conformity bias such as: Conformity studies (Asch, 1956), Obedience studies (Milgram, 1974, as cited in Reicher & Haslam, 2006) and Stanford prison study (Zimbardo, 1971), the focus will come back to stereotype threat theory. The main argument in this dissertation will be that an appreciable percentage of individuals resist negative stereotyping rather than accept or adapt to it. The central aim of this study therefore, is to determine the question which has so far been neglected, that is to understand the conditions under which an individual/group will resist rather than conform. For this, it is imperative to bring in the topic of power to social psychology so as to initiate the vocabulary of resistance in it. Social psychology is as political as it is psychical, and as historical as it is contextual. As is evident from the quote – 'where there is power, there is resistance' (Foucault, 1978, as cited in Abu-Lughod, 1990) - the endeavour of this paper is to highlight that the importance of studying resistance will be incomplete without the discussion on power and its role in everyday practices in society. Incorporating the aspects of power and resistance into classic studies on stereotype threat will highlight the personal as well as collective agency of stereotyped individuals, which till now seems missing from the literature.

The dissertation will move almost in a cyclical fashion; emerging from a review of stereotype threat theory, the first task will be to take a step back and estimate the

trend of conformity in classic (historical) studies in social psychology. This will be followed by an attempt to conceptualize resistance with the stereotype threat theory in focus; the recent works that have attempted to revisit the classic studies on conformity to look for evidence of resistance in them will also be reviewed. As will be shown, an important piece of the puzzle, which is resistance, is largely missing from the literature. One possible explanation for this could be the overall assumption and tradition prevalent in social psychology. And this neglect becomes even more acute when one considers the abundance of studies on resistance in other disciplines.

1.2 Dissertation Overview

Stereotype threat research grew rapidly after the work of Steele & Aronson (1995) was first published. It has grown manifold in the past two decades. Research on stereotype threat has dealt with issues such as how the threat affects individuals (processes involved), who is affected, and ways to reduce stereotype threat; all the while demonstrating how the individual is negatively affected by this situational predicament. This leads to the question as to why the individual in social psychology has been (more often than not) portrayed as one who bows down to the situation instead of one who rises up to it. One of the possible explanations could be hidden in trends of the discipline itself. As will be shown, this trend in the discipline has led to various theories on social influence that are almost synonymous with conformity, and therefore do not portray the complete picture.

It is hoped that the review presented in this dissertation will go a certain way in taking this debate forward with a different theoretical framework at hand. Chapter 2 will be a step back from the stereotype threat theory literature to present a detailed review of some of the classic studies in social psychology and their emphasis (or not) on conformity - the tendency of a human being to go along with group norms and conform passively, thereby displaying a lack of agency. Following this, the chapter will provide a historical overview of the conformity research starting in the 1950s. As will become clear, there is much more to conformity than what meets the eye. The review will throw light on how conformity has been understood (or misunderstood) as a unitary concept. The possible reasons of this happening will also be explored in this chapter. The major shortcoming of the social influence approach in social psychology has been its inability to acknowledge the other side of the continuum – which is that of resistance. This chapter will end with a section on the alternative model of social influence which

accepts this aspect of social influence and has been portrayed by Moscovici, Lage & Naffrechoux (1969) in what they call the study of minority influence.

Chapter 3 will be a continuation of the last section of the previous chapter and will aim to overcome the weaknesses pointed out in it. Since, not many studies in psychology have theorized resistance, apart from the discipline of psychology, borrowing from other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and political studies becomes necessary. The themes emerging from this review will go a long way in conceptualizing resistance for social psychology, which is another goal of this chapter. In the process of review, issues such as the level of analysis at which studies on resistance are done in various disciplines and whether the meaning of resistance has been interpreted to challenge or maintain the status quo will be discussed. The assumption is that this approach may allow the studies in social psychology to go beyond its 'conformist' traditions and move towards a paradigm that looks at the individual as an actor instead of only a reactor.

Having done a review of the general trend in social psychology in the area of conformity and attempting a conceptualization of the term resistance for social psychology, chapter 4 will endeavour to take the theory that this dissertation stated off with – the stereotype threat theory - as a case in point. The first section gives a broad overview of the research on stereotype threat which includes three areas such as processes in stereotype threat, effect of stereotype threat on the individual and the ways to reduce the effect of stereotype threat. Having reviewed various papers on this topic, one common omission that most certainly can be pointed at is the lack of an explicit meaning of the term stereotype threat that these researchers have employed. The most common assumption seems to be taking stereotyping as tantamount to negative stereotyping. The implications of an alternative understanding of the term stereotype will be discussed. Lastly, the role of the perspective one chooses to view the term will be highlighted by showing a transition from the social cognition to the social identity perspective.

Chapter 5 will conclude this work by recapitulating the reviews done through the previous chapters. An important addition in this chapter will be the development of a conceptual framework emerging from the review, which will be a guiding structure for further empirical work in this area.

Chapter 2

Conforming to Conformity: The bias in social psychological literature

"Whenever you see yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect."

- Mark Twain, 1904

As we grow old, we are often socialized into thinking that being the 'majority' or following what the majority does is the right thing to do. This view is often echoed in classrooms, for e.g. when given a choice between having students go out and play or sit in a classroom and paint, depending on which option gets more votes, the phrase "majority wins" may often be heard. This in a way may come to act as an implicit reinforcement of what in psychology has been called the conformity bias (Moscovici, 1976). It is considered 'safe' to go with the group.

Keeping with this, this chapter aims at describing some of the seminal works in social psychology and their emphasis (or not) on conformity - the tendency of a human being to go along with group norms and conform passively, thereby displaying a lack of agency. Following this, an attempt on understanding of the phenomenon and what it actually entails will be made. This will be done by reviewing writings on conformity starting from the 1950s up till 2012. The review will throw light on how conformity has been understood (or misunderstood) as a unitary concept, even though there are many variants to it. While the crucial question centres around an examination of *why* social psychological literature has come to rely so heavily on conformity when interpreting social influence situations; the chapter will also address other questions like: what could be the possible reasons for this conformity bias? How and why is a culture of conformity created? A possibility for an alternative model to understand social influence processes will be explored.

Although the following paragraphs may have an accusatory tone towards social psychology for it having a favourable bias towards conformity, wherein those who tread different paths are labelled 'deviants', 'rogues' or 'mavericks' (Efferson *et al.*, 2008; Nemeth *et al.*, 2011); it should be stated at the outset, that this work too is not entirely free of judgments, albeit of a different kind. In the initial phase of reviewing literature on stereotype threat what struck as most salient was the negligence to any scope for individual *agency* in a situation that involved threat because of the individual's identity. The literature goes a great length to display how an individual, if he belongs to a

negatively stereotyped group would be at the risk of conforming the negative stereotype if his/her identity is made salient. Steele & Aronson (1995) demonstrated this phenomenon for black college freshmen; Spencer, Steele & Quinn (1999) for women in the math domain, and Stone (2002) for Whites compared with Blacks and Hispanics on tasks assumed to reflect natural sports ability. Not once was the word 'resistance' encountered. Although terms like 'resilience', 'reduction of the threat' and 'reactance' have been used in certain studies, they still do not qualify as displaying agency and outright confrontation or opposition to the negative stereotyping. The endeavour, therefore, is to close this gap and understand the discourse on conformity and resistance in social psychological literature. The reason why this work may not be value neutral is because the lookout will be for resistance or anything close; and how social psychology sees it. In the following sections, some of the classic studies in psychology are discussed to indicate the overall orientation of these studies towards conformity and its implications for social psychology.

2.1 Classic studies on “conformity”

As students of psychology, we are well versed with the seminal studies of Asch (1956), Milgram (1974), Sherif (1935) and Zimbardo (1971); and from a reading of these works there is little doubt that social influence is considered almost synonymous with conformity, while the other extreme remains largely ignored. To illustrate this point a brief description of few of these studies as they have been popularized in social psychology is given below.

Sherif (1935) used the autokinetic effect, where a spot of light in a dark room will appear to move (even though it is still), to demonstrate the effect that ambiguous situations may have on individuals in a group. When tested individually the participants' estimate of how far the point moved varied. However, in groups of three when participants had to say their estimate aloud, it was observed that over a number of trials the group came towards having a similar estimate. This shows that in an ambiguous situation, a person looks to others for guidance or do adopt the group norm.

Asch's (1956) studies included male participants who attended an experimental session in groups that of seven to nine people. In the setting, only one out the many male individuals was a real participant – the rest were confederates. The experimenter showed the group two cards; one with a single line whereas the second with three lines of varying lengths – one of which was the same length as the line on the original card. The task given to groups was to tell which of the three lines on the second card was of the same length as that displayed on the first card. In the first two trials, all of the confederates and participant gave the correct answer. However, in some of the later trials, each of the confederates gave the wrong answer, consistently. Participants agreed with the majority in 36.8% of the critical trials – i.e. when the confederates gave the wrong answer – even though they were clearly wrong.

Zimbardo (1971) conducted studies to understand the development of norms, and the effects of roles with certain societal expectations in a prison setting. Participants were randomly assigned to either the role of prisoner or guard and the setting was kept as close to real life situation as possible. Very soon in the experiment, the guards and prisoners were seen to settle into their respective roles. The guards began to harass prisoners and behaved in a brutal and sadistic manner, and similarly, the prisoners took on the role assigned to them seriously and followed the rules of the prison. The experiment, originally planned to be run for a fortnight was shut down after 6 days as the situation got out of control with the guards getting more aggressive and brutal and the prisoners becoming more submissive. This clearly shows that the roles people play can significantly shape their attitudes and behaviour.

In 1974, Milgram became interested in understanding the extent to which individuals would go when it came to obeying an instruction when it involved harming another person. The experiment had a 'learner' (a confederate), who was supposed to learn a pair of words and recall the paired word every time the 'teacher' (participant) asked a question. The "learner" almost always ended up giving a wrong answer. The 'teacher' was asked by the experimenter to administer an electric shock (ranging from 15 volts to 450 volts) each time the learner gives a wrong response. All participants went on to administer shocks of 300 V and 65% of participants (teachers) went on to the highest level of shock that is 450 volts. Even though these were just pseudo-shocks, this study

showed how individuals are likely to follow orders from authority figures and obey instructions even if it involved inflicting pain on others.

These four studies are illustrative of the dominant method of the times – experimentation; but more importantly they are illustrative of the disposition to portray the subject as docile and passive. This portrayal of docility and passivity are signs of a larger phenomenon that these studies have commonly running through them – that is conformity. In a 1965 paper Allen (as cited in Hodges & Geyers, 2006) asserts that specialised literature commonly assimilates the process of influence to the process of conformity. Moscovici (1969) termed this excessive attention of social influence literature on conformity as *conformity bias*, which he explained as:

The tendency to assume that any type of influence leads to conformity, and moreover that conformity is the sole phenomenon achieved by means of influence. On the other hand, when examining the individual, it is always assumed that he asks himself the question "Should I follow the group or the minority?" or in other words he is faced with the alternative of conformity or deviance. (Moscovici, 1969, p. 365).

Examining closely, the four studies mentioned above give an idea of what conformity bias involves. Sherif (1935) points to the fact that individuals tend to conform to group norms more often than not, thus implying a lack of individual agency. Similarly, in Milgram and Zimbardo's work the individual is shown to be taking up roles assigned to her/him without questioning the authority. Human beings have been portrayed, often implicitly, by psychologists as completely the product of forces in an environment that is external to them (Stryker, 1997). In connection to this effect, Haslam & Reicher (2012) remark that:

These studies have not only had influence in academic spheres. They have spilled over into our general culture and shaped popular understanding, such that 'everyone knows' that people inevitably succumb to the demands of authority, however immoral the consequences (p. 1).

These studies do not acknowledge the presence of anything near to resistance. As Parker (2007) puts it, “the hopeless moral of the [studies] story is that resistance is futile” (as cited in Haslam & Reicher, 2012, p. 84). In his 1973 paper Adair (as cited in Tuffin, 2005) refers to this problem by noting that human subjects are not passive blobs. In relation to this, Tuffin (2005) states:

Returning to the metaphor of human beings as billiards or pool balls on a table – while it is true that we are subject to physical forces, it is also the case that we respond to forces and events in ways that are uniquely human. We are able to both act and react and we also possess the ability to react reflexively to our initial reactions. Human beings under the scrutiny of experimental situations will react to all aspects of that situation, not simply the aspects the experimenter has focused on.” (Tuffin, 2005, p. 22).

In fact, this tradition has been observed in disciplines other than psychology; Stryker (1997) alleges sociologists as having presented a picture of the individual as ‘socialized automatons’, carrying out the obligations of social roles they are assigned to play in order to assure the stability of the social system of which they are member. However, a lesson that has emerged is that the human being is an actor, an active agent who acts on and alters the (social and non-social) environment that impinges on her or him, who initiates transaction with that environment and responds selectively to it (Stryker, 1997, p. 319). This view of the human as actor does not deny the fact or power of conditioning, nor the fact or power of normative demands on persons to play out roles as scripted. It only asserts that humans can play a significant role in their own destiny. Parenthetically, the shift in focus that humans are actors as well as reactors – imposes social psychology the task of investigating not only conformity, but autonomy, creativity, efficacy as well – not only social reproduction and stability but also social production and change (Stryker, 1997).

While the studies mentioned previously classify as the classics in social psychological literature and have been used here as the opening of the chapter so as to give the reader an idea about how deeply conformity and the idea of the individual as a passive blob has been ingrained into the social psychological tradition, there are examples of other studies that have dealt with the individual in a social setting in a similar manner. Prominent works that convey a similar sentiment include Le Bon’s

(1985) study of crowd dynamics. According to Reicher (2001), Le Bon divorced crowds from their social context; his theory assumed that crowd participation extinguishes our normal psychological capacities and reveal a primal nature which is usually well hidden from view. It was this understanding that promulgated a conformist view of the individual, who instead of having a power of his/her own is shown to be suggestible and easily influenced. The crowd was understood to take away the individual identity or the capability to control behaviours, and become subject to contagion. On similar lines, in a 1924a paper Allport (as cited in Greenwood, 2000) referred to the group mind approach as the “group fallacy” (p. 691) and claimed “there is no psychology of groups which is not essentially and entirely a psychology of individuals” (Allport, 1924b, p. 4, as cited in Greenwood, 2000). It should be noted that these are just a few (out of the many) studies in social psychology that perpetuate a grossly skewed impression of human nature. This clearly is not the complete picture. And therefore, research must question current assumptions and orthodoxies to create surprising, novel and valid knowledge. Studies should also demonstrate that human beings are tougher and more competent than social scientists believe, and have led large segments of the society to believe.

To start of the process of review, a random search with the words ‘conformity’ and ‘conformity bias’ was done that fetched numerous articles, of which 30 were reviewed to observe the trend from 1950s to 2010s. The process of reviewing the literature was one that included various revelations and acted as a continuous force to rethink the dissertation title. The assumption was that most of the literature emphasizes conformity and ignores nonconformity or resistance (subtle difference in definitions will be clarified through the chapters). The literature revealed that though it is true to say that most literature overemphasizes conformity (see Friend, Rafferty & Bramel, 1990), it is not true for all. This clarity comes from the part of writings that responds to the numerous works based on Asch studies that grossly misrepresent Asch’s work (Campbell, 1990; Friend, Rafferty, & Bramel, 1990). In his work titled *‘Studies of Independence and Conformity: A Minority of One against a Unanimous Majority’*, Asch (1956) meant to explore individual differences in independence or lack of independence in the face of arbitrary group opposition. He, in fact, criticises the one sidedness of social influence studies and urges for the need to look at the diverse range of responses that could be possible. According to Suedfeld (1996) this one-sided

emphasis (in terms of social influence) leads to scientific inaccuracy, and may become a self-fulfilling prophecy; having been convinced that they cannot cope, the affected individuals and groups stop trying and become dependent on others. "The striving for independence and resistance to encroachment are as much facts about people as is conformity" (Asch, 1956, p. 3). Further, Asch states that "it is not justifiable to assume in advance that a theory of social influence should be a theory of submission to social pressure." Going by the last few lines, it becomes clear that Asch did not mean for his work to be a work on conformity. Why then is a study so sophisticated and balanced (in terms of its treatment of independence and conformity) given away as 'conformity studies'? Where did this tradition of equating social influence with conformity begin?

Conformity studies became extremely popular in the 1950s. Writers on conformity have belonged to disciplines like social psychology, sociology, political psychology, evolutionary human behaviour sciences and political economy. This popularity is evident from the number of articles that raise the point about the growing number of literature on conformity at that time. As Willis (1965) states:

Social psychology is currently preoccupied with phenomena of conformity. As a result, other modes of social response such as independence and negativism are relatively neglected. (Willis, 1965, p. 373).

Thus, conformity was being given undue importance at the expense of other possibilities that may arise in a situation that more often than not is described as a conformity situation. In his 1965 article, Willis mentions the then recent book titled *Conformity and Deviation* (Berg & Bass, 1961, as cited in Willis, 1965) which again speaks more of conformity than deviation having devoted only two chapters to it.

Could a part of this distortion be attributed to certain features of the discipline itself? According to Moscovici (2001):

Psychology has had a complicated history in the last century, and it is bearing its marks in the present. It has gradually moved away from the study of basic human issues, and of phenomena of personal experiencing, to become a 'social psychology of nice persons' (Moscovici, 2001, p. 79).

According to Suedfeld (1996) suffering is more dramatic than coping and sufferers – deservedly – evoke sympathy and assistance. He points that the humane reactions have led to a culture of pity and self-pity that exaggerates minor problems and thus trivializes serious ones, and this could be a possible explanation for the one-sidedness in social influence studies wherein instead of the unconquerable, the susceptible and the vulnerable are focused upon. Stricker, Messick & Jackson (1970) observe this distortion of theoretical and research literature on group pressure in its focus on conformity (i.e., the subject tends toward agreement with the group), largely ignoring other important responses (Asch, 1956; Jahoda, 1959), such as anti-conformity (i.e., the subject tends toward disagreement with the group) and independence (i.e., the subject continues to remain different from the group).

There are also other possible reasons for this asymmetry. One reason why conformity is so ubiquitous is that it is often adaptive: Following others often leads to better and more accurate decisions, especially when we face uncertainty (Cialdini, 2001; Crutchfield, 1955, as cited in Griskevicius *et al.*, 2006). Another commentator, Harris (1985) in his critical note on Asch's data and the 'Asch' effect points strongly that the Asch study has been interpreted by social scientist in a way that it never should have been. The reasons he cites for the misinterpretation of Asch studies is that the researchers following Asch's study only looked at the results that came off the experiments but conveniently overlooked the qualitative data that included interviews with the participants in Asch's studies (Friend *et al.* 1990). Following this initial misinterpretation, the phenomenon took form of something like a snowball effect wherein researchers following the "Asch" effect started a lot more work in the area of conformity thereby expanding the area of research manifold. Campbell (1990) describes these researches very aptly when he says:

Most conformity studies have been done by researchers who have implicitly created a deprecating social distance between themselves and those fellow human beings whom they have duped into "conforming." How provocatively paradoxical it is that Asch has been himself most stubbornly independent of the consensus among his fellow social psychologists (Campbell, 1990, p. 41).

In fact, conformity has received considerable attention not just from social psychologists but also from human evolutionary ecologists. Taking the

conceptualization of conformity a step further, Efferson *et al.* (2008) describe it as more than just a tendency to follow the majority; it involves an *exaggerated* tendency to follow the majority. Calling it the only frequency-dependent form of social influence, the ‘exaggerated’ part of the definition has been emphasized so as to reveal a “bias sufficiently strong to increase the size of the majority through time.”

The paragraphs above show that there undoubtedly is a need to go beyond these studies on conformity and get a fuller picture of the individual who does more than just conform. The following section will represent the social psychological literature on conformity and shed light on the alternatives given by commentators on conformity.

2.2 Clearing the air on conformity

The misinterpretation of the Asch studies have been mentioned above, but the present work is also not entirely free of such biases. The assumption before starting this work was also to take Asch’s work as conformity studies. However, in the process of reviewing the literature there emerged a pattern of what must be the greatest discourses in the field of social psychology, and this makes way for the possibility of other probable responses in the social influence processes.

Before going any further it is important to understand what exactly conformity is. Conformity can very aptly be explained by the phrase, “when in Rome, do as the Romans do”. When present in unfamiliar and ambiguous situations individuals try to look around and understand how the group to which they belong is behaving and adapt to the setting by following the social norms. To say that conformity is the *only* aspect that Asch was trying to decipher from his experiments would seem far from appropriate. Asch’s work involved studies of the effects of a unanimous majority on the independence and conformity of individuals; and there has been utmost clarity on that in his studies. Despite that, distortions have been made. By examining social psychology textbooks occurring between 1953 and 1984 in the US, Friend, Rafferty & Bramel (1990) note that authors have often distorted Asch’s finding by accentuating the role of conformity and underestimating that of independence; and they believe that this trend has increased with time. According to Friend, Rafferty & Bramel (1990), whereas Asch concluded that he had convincingly demonstrated powers of independence in certain highly demanding conditions, most writers portray his findings as evidence that individuals are predominantly weak in the face of social pressures. These portrayals have minimized or ignored the major finding - i.e. the capacity of the

individual to resist in the face of group pressure and stress (Friend *et al*, 1990). The individual in Asch's studies was much more critical and much less malleable than what is made to believe. His findings are not just misinterpreted but often reversed. According to Cialdini & Trost (1998), Asch's experiments were in fact undertaken in an attempt to refute the view that people are 'silly sheep,' willing to believe anything others say. Asch (1990) himself lamented the failure of social psychologists to appreciate the "love of truth as psychological reality, and the power it can command" (p. 55, as cited in Hodges & Geyer, 2006).

A recent account of the Asch experiments is offered by Hodges & Geyer (2006) which they call the "nonconformist account". This writing takes on a different perspective on the Asch problem wherein they try to explain that conformity is a far more complex phenomenon (socially and morally) to be explained in as simplistic terms as done by some writers of social psychology. They suggest a value-pragmatics approach that includes the various gamut of values such as truth, social solidarity etc. at play in what must have been a frustrating situation for the subject. Taking from Hodges & Baron's (1992) proposition of hierarchically related values, they point out a "zero tolerance norm" (Krueger & Funder, 2004) that takes agreement on even a single trial as conformity and argue that this is not how conformity or the lack of it should be judged. Hodges & Geyer (2006) endorse a no rule-following procedure to be adequate to the task because emphasis on a single value (e.g. truth) may also not do justice to the complex phenomenon. The major emphasis on Hodges & Geyer's analysis of the Asch experiments is that of the multiple perspective approach. The situation is not just seen as value-wise and morally more complex but they also brings in the dimension of social, cultural and temporal dimension of the action. When asking the question "what is truth?" one needs to take all these dimensions into account. For what might be the truth at one time or in one society might not be in another. For e.g. publicly agreeing, while privately disagreeing with others may be seen as exemplifying tact and sensitivity rather than submission and cowardice (Bond & Smith, 1996).

Another author, M. Jahoda (1959) in response to the rapidly growing literature on conformity asked a fundamental question – How is nonconformity possible? As is evident with these kinds of questions, the stage was already set for phenomenon other than conformity. Jahoda (1959) in her analysis of the situation points to the fact that despite the unanimity in conditions accounting for conformity, evidence for independence exists. Not only in common sense, but in the multitude of studies that by

rejecting the null hypothesis of independence actually succeed in removing from the mainstream the ‘miscreants’, ‘uncooperative’ beings. At another level, Jahoda asks another basic question – conformity to whom? And this is where a critique of the Asch studies comes in to play. The Asch experiments involved judgment of a physical stimuli i.e. the length of a line by a naïve subject. Whether or not the subject really cared about these physical stimuli can be questioned (Horsney *et al.*, 2003). As Jahoda puts it, when one cares about the issue at stake, one may just be conforming to one’s conscience. And since, most experiments manipulated conditions of influence on issues with regard to which the individual had no investment (emotional or intellectual), it led to a growing popularity of conformity rather than independence (Jahoda, 1959).

Schulman (1967), by focusing on another issue – Conformity to the experimenter and/or to the group? - succeeds in toning down the effect of ‘conformity’ in the sense that he challenges the notion of only a majority ‘influencing’ the minority to bring them to conform. The normative conformity is not only to the majority in the group but also to the experimenter considering some power relationships are at play since the experimenter evaluates the subject. Findings suggest that apart from informational and normative conformity to the group, there is a component of normative conformity to the experimenter as well. This in effect, dilutes the overall conformity effect of the group. So, even if the experimenter-subject relationship is constant the power dynamics at play are such that this will affect the results in some way or the other.

Overall, most studies done post-Asch suggest that interpretations based upon results from studies which have used Asch situation must be reconsidered. Interestingly, Jahoda’s final comment in her paper echoes a similar sentiment when she writes that:

...the first task is the development of methods for identification of investment in an issue. If and when such methods are developed, the experiments on conformity in the literature must be repeated, replacing the unidimensional criteria with the more complex definition (Jahoda, 1959, p. 117).

The above discussion indicates that conformity is a concept injudiciously studied by researchers. In the process what has come off the discipline is a model of the human being who is malleable, timid and passive. Since this is not entirely true for all

individuals what is required is to develop an approach based on a resistance paradigm that sees the individual as an active agent who has the ability to take action against any kind of injustice meted out on him/her. The literature points to the presence of phenomenon other than conformity. In the next section, the aspect of the literature that reveals several other possible phenomena antagonistic to the conformity situation are reviewed.

2.3 Conformity: Not a unitary concept

Clearly, conformity is not as simple a concept as it has made out to be. Just as binary oppositions exist in concepts - moral, philosophical or physical - conformity too must have a binary opposite. This lesser known opposite is what came to be known in psychological literature, though only gradually. The conceptualization of conformity changed over time with little consensus on what conformity entails. Different philosophical and value orientations have theorized conformity in ways it was not earlier. It was Deutsch & Gerard (1955) who for the first time attempted to distinguish among different kinds of social influences. They hypothesised two types of social influence that were operative in the experiments on conformity of Asch (1956), Sherif (1935) and Bovard (1951, as cited in Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). These were the normative social influence and the informational social influence. The former was defined as an influence to conform to the positive expectations of another and the latter as an influence to accept information obtained from another as evidence about reality (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Needless to say, both definitions implicitly take social influence as synonymous with conformity. And so, this can be taken as the first major bifurcation of the concept of conformity.

Later, Willis (1963) advocated a two dimensional model of social response over the unidimensional one, the two dimensions being independence and net conformity (Jahoda, 1959) and conformity and nonconformity (Walker & Heyens, 1962, as cited in Willis, 1963). Willis appraises these earlier models as having a serious defect, that of failing to distinguish between possible variants of nonconformity (Willis, 1965). He also makes clear that the knowledge of nonconformity cannot be derived from what is known of conformity. Just because the presence of certain conditions leads to conformity, may not necessarily mean that their absence will lead to nonconformity. Willis also critiques earlier works on conformity as lacking the distinction in terms of the motivation or intention to conform. He later theorized to show conformity, counter-

conformity and independence as three vertices of a triangle instead of being seen along a single continuum (Willis, 1963). However, in his 1965 work, Willis goes further to propose a multidimensional view of conformity/nonconformity. For this, Willis proposes conceptual definitions of conformity and nonconformity that can be operationalized depending on the context. Conformity is defined as *behaviour intended to fulfil normative group expectations as these expectations are perceived by the individual*. Whereas a broad definition of nonconformity is given - *the behaviour which is intended to facilitate the attainment of some goal other than that of fulfilling perceived normative group expectations* (Willis, 1965). He quotes Beloff (1958) who distinguished between two types of conformity – *conventionality and acquiescence* (as cited in Willis, 1965). According to Beloff (1958), the former refers to the extent of agreement between an individual's responses and the mean responses of other individuals coming from similar backgrounds. The latter refers to the degree to which individual yields to pressures arising from the immediate social situation. Another distinction that is made is that between nonconformity and deviance. Deviant behaviour customarily denotes patterns of behaviour engendering social disapproval and negative sanctions (Clinard, 1963), whereas nonconformity generally neither denotes nor connotes such disapproval (Willis, 1965). Even though this distinction might be correct, the reason for this distinction and politics behind is a matter that requires greater thought and discussion; and will be dealt with in the coming chapters. Another term introduced in this article is *over-conformity* that may or may not be considered as nonconformity. Over-conformity may be used as a way of expressing hostility against the influence agent. Here the motivation of the individual is to not conform.

In order to further identify specific kinds of nonconformity, Willis (1965) fractionalizes social behaviour into three dimensions. These are a) relevance-irrelevance b) dependence-independence and c) conformity-anti-conformity. This order wise assertion of questions is known as hierarchical hypothesis (Willis, 1965). Only when the norm or standard has some degree of relevance to the decision facing the individual, does it become meaningful to speak of dependence-independence. And once, the second dimension has been identified, only then can conformity have a clear cut meaning. On the basis of this fractionalization, Willis describes the basic response modes that may arise. These are conformity, independence, anti-conformity, variability, negativism, innovation and changeability (see Willis, 1965). However, Willis himself

comes across as partial to conformity when he assumes that “the typical member of a social group or society does conform to some degree- since otherwise the group or society cannot be said to exist.”

Stricker, Messick & Jackson (1970) in their study examine the dimensionality of responses to group pressure and its generality across procedures employing different kinds of social situations. The group pressure situations were varied, one as similar to the Asch situation (counting clicks and responding to attitude items) and two others involved questionnaires with fictitious average answers (estimating probabilities of events and responding to attitude items). Two groups of subjects were classified as those unsuspecting about the deceptions employed in these devices and suspicious subjects. The central theme that emerged from this investigation was the complexity of group pressure responses. What Stricker, Messick and Jackson (1970) show is that conformity, anti-conformity and independence are very different phenomena; they function differently and are somewhat specific to the particular situation that elicits them.

Another interesting differentiation has been made recently by Griskevicius *et al.* (2006) in their article titled: *Going Along Versus Going Alone: When Fundamental Motives Facilitate Strategic (Non)Conformity*. The question about who conforms more – men or women – led Griskevicius *et al.* to formulate the term strategic (non)conformity. As is evident from the term, this study places importance on the situation, thereby reiterating what Stricker *et al.* (1970) observed in their study; that conformity is a complex process and functions differently for different situations and groups. Griskevicius *et al.* acknowledge two kinds of behaviour in nonconformity – independence (or resisting influence) and anti-conformity (rebellious against influence). The research examines how certain powerful human *motives* can influence people’s tendency to stand out through nonconformity or to fit in through conformity. By the help of three studies, the effect of the temporary activation of two fundamental social motives—a motive to protect oneself from danger and a motive to attract a mate—to influence conformity behaviours is explored. Griskevicius *et al.* (2006) in their findings indicate that a self-protective mind-set (when people were motivated to avoid threat and to protect themselves from danger) led both men and women to conform more. In contrast, a mating mind-set generally produced different effects for men and women. For men, the goal to attract a mate generally led them to go against the preferences of others; whereas for women, the goal to attract a mate generally tended to increase the

likelihood that women would conform to the group. This is the reason why it has been aptly called *strategic* (non)conformity.

Jahoda (1959) defined the problem in this issue by developing a matrix of three dimensions (Table 2.1) namely; initial investment in the issue, adoption of advocated position and private opinions differs from public opinion. By dichotomizing these into yes and no, she came up with eight types of conformity and independence. From a) independent dissent, b) undermined independence, c) independent consent, and d) compliance that occurred in persons who had emotional investment in the issue at hand the continuum ranged to e) compulsive resistance, f) expedient resistance, g) conformity, and h) expedient conformity in those persons for whom the issue was not in the periphery of their life space. In her conceptualization of nonconformity, Jahoda (1959) takes the case of psychoneurotics and schizophrenics who by not showing the general trend toward conforming behaviour that others demonstrate are often labelled as 'deficient' or 'deviants' from the normal. "Nonconformity, in this sense, is sometimes indeed the first indication of incipient mental disease." (Jahoda, 1959, p. 105).

Table 2.1: Types of Conformity and Independence

Initial investment in issue	Yes				No			
	No		Yes		No		Yes	
Adoption of advocated position	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Private opinion differs from public opinion	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Designation of process	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>h</i>

Source: Jahoda, M. (1959), p. 113

Now, most of these studies have pitted conformity against various terms like anti-conformity, nonconformity, independence. Are these terms and differentiations valid? Can we draw definite lines between conformity and its antonyms? In his 1909 book Cooley (as cited in Jahoda, 1959) concludes that that 'there is no definite line between conformity and nonconformity; there is simply a more or less characteristic.' At the root of the debate then, is the question about the criteria one chooses to differentiate nonconformity from independence (or from anti-conformity and/or resistance). This difficulty was shown by Jahoda (1959) when she described the

subjectivity involved in this task. The same position taken by different individuals can have completely different meanings – i.e. different antecedents, contexts and consequences (Jahoda, 1959).

There is a cultural underpinning to the notion of conformity-independence as well. Kim & Markus (1999) in their cultural analysis highlight the relationship between individual preference and the adoption and perpetuation of cultural values in the preference for uniqueness or conformity. The four studies they conducted revealed that East Asians preferred targets that represented conformity, whereas European Americans preferred targets that represented uniqueness. What is interesting to note is the suggestion that depending on the cultural context, "uniqueness" can be "deviance" and "conformity" can be "harmony", as is evident from the title '*Deviance or Uniqueness, Harmony or Conformity? A Cultural Analysis*'. From a cultural standpoint, the aspect of meaning-making (Bruner, 1990, as cited in Kim & Markus, 1999) becomes salient wherein the same action can be interpreted differently depending on the cultural context along with the individual actions. This goes with Kim & Markus' (1990) assertion that:

Cultural phenomena are complex, subtle, and replete with inconsistencies and contradictions among ideologies, institutions, practices, and a wide spectrum of ideas about what is right and what is wrong in any given situation. (Kim & Markus, 1990, p. 798).

Not all East Asians conform, some resist and go beyond what is expected of them as their role in society; and not all European Americans strive for uniqueness.

The Bedouin women in Abu-Rabia-Queder's (2008) study display their tact by using conformity to create social change. The idea is to go along with the acceptable norms in the social structure in order to negotiate power relations. These women's adopted conformist behaviour was in exchange for the ability to promote change in the schooling and employment of females and to retain the access they had gained in those arenas. Five types of personal conformist behaviours were adopted by first educated women to cope with their situation: passivity/silence, passive resemblance, restraint, role modelling, and putting on an act. Thus conformity is not just for the malleable and the meek; it can just as well be displayed as a tactic strategically mould situations as one wants.

The above review suggests that there definitely is scope for studying phenomenon contrary to conformity in social psychology. Possible explanations for the neglect of occurrences other than conformity have been cited above. However, one key factor – the methodology – also plays a great role in what becomes the focus of a discipline and what not. This key factor is explored in the next section.

2.4 Method matters: Dominance of positivism in psychology

“...positivism is alive and well, indeed, is thriving, in psychology today, even in what is understood to be the most anti-positivist tendencies of its recent history” (Tolman, 1992, 25).

Since its inception, psychology has been dominated by a positivistic epistemological position. This has been because of psychology’s endeavour to project itself as an objective, value-neutral and universal science. However, in psychology, people are both the investigator and the investigated (Baker, 1992); and this is where the complexity emanates. Because of the methodological restraint, the subject matter becomes ahistorical and apolitical (Sarason, 1981). This will be explicated in the paragraphs that follow. In the endeavour for an objective science, “the researcher becomes the ‘objective’ observer whose personal biases and values are not to be brought into the picture; and the subject becomes the object” – in order to eliminate the biases, and paint a completely objective picture of the discipline. Baker (1992) explains this in detail by historically situating this practice in the discipline:

As psychology evolved in the 20th century, its practitioners manifested an almost neurotic need to be seen as scientific, by which they meant, just like the physicists; and this led them to reject the subjective world precisely because this was not in the physical domain what should have been the quintessential domain of psychology was set aside, not because it was not germane to psychology so much as it was not germane to physics! (Baker, 1992 p. 13).

In relation to this, Wittgenstein (1953) asserts that it would be misleading to say that psychology treats psychological processes in the psychical sphere, as does physics in physical. In a similar vein, Sanford (1903) described the application of methods from physics to psychology as a “dumb compulsion”.

The history of psychology as a discipline, therefore, becomes conspicuous. According to Valsiner (2006) psychology's centre of geographical and cultural location changed from Europe to North America as a result of World War II. This entailed a change in focus—from the holistic phenomenological understanding of the world that is characteristic of Continental Europe (Diriwachter, 2003, as cited in Valsiner, 2006) to a psychology that was adjusted to the basically atomistic and pragmatist ethos of the New World. Somewhere between the advent of behaviourism and cognitive psychology, social psychology emerged as a separate discipline around the dawn of the 20th century. The expectation was that social psychology will finally bring in the element of 'social' and equip psychologists to answer social psychological problems. Yet, the dominant epistemology in social psychology remained positivistic in nature (Gergen, 1985). So much so social psychology got divided into further areas and this bifurcation was a result of the infamous crisis in social psychology that occurred in the 1970s; one part viewed itself in historical and social constructionist terms (Gergen, 1982, 1985), while the other adopted the new 'cognitivist' re-definition of experimental social psychology (Valsiner, 2006). The experimental tradition built knowledge on the outcomes of psychological functions, while the historical orientation tried to make sense of the complex phenomena of social representations, narratives and identity. The irony though, as Valsiner (2006) puts it is that both the experimental and historical orientations in North American social psychology proceed with a primacy of the empirical side of science over its theoretical component. In recent literature, the former is referred to as mainstream social psychology, and the latter has been christened – critical social psychology; their main point of difference being the methodological positions they take (Billig, 1997). Mainstream social psychology has rarely considered or acknowledged the profound epistemological critique that continues to haunt the discipline by way of a continued set of insecurities about experimentation that are addressed implicitly in much of its secondary (non-journal-based) literature (Stam, Lubek & Radtke, 1998, as cited in Tuffin, 2005), while the mainstream literature continues to narrow its objects of investigation. The main point of critique that critical social psychology has for the mainstream is its obsession with experimentation and its oblivion to history.

Another possible source of the asymmetry and one-sidedness in the social psychological research tradition is provided by Tuffin (2005) who points out that individualism is promoted as the dominant ideology at the expense of traditional

notions of collective and social responsibility. Further, it is the “science culture” and the values that prescribe theory building and empirical research, that are attributed to fostering individualism (Pepitone, 1997). The widespread acceptance of individualism sits behind the claim that ‘social psychology’ is an oxymoron. Further, stripping the social out of social psychology has severely constrained approaches to the study of social life (Tuffin, 2005, p. 159). According to Pepitone (1997) social psychology has neglected macro structure and culture in its theory and research. The failure to conceive individuals as embedded in socioeconomic environments, as role players in organizational structures, as positioned in multiple communication channels and networks, and as members of cultural groups, has discouraged theoretical accounts and representations of human social behaviour that accurately map what is observed in the real world as people know it (Pepitone, 1997). The field has been steered by meta-theoretical perspectives that focus theory and research on the individual and to a lesser extent on the small group. As Semin (1997) points out while the goal is to explain social behaviour, the persistent methodological commitment has been to processes or properties of individual agents.

Much the same, Sarason (1981) argues that history is treated as an irrelevancy by psychology generally, ‘For all practical purposes psychology is ahistorical. It has its subject matter: the individual, and all else is commentary – interesting, but commentary’ (as cited in Tuffin, 2005, p.39). The inability to articulate the *social* in social psychology has meant that the discipline has been *all* psychology, *all* of the time (Stam, 2006). Tuffin (2005) also maintains that attempts at capturing immutable laws of social behaviour without regard to history and culture are not only impossible, but naive. But there has always been a reluctance of the mainstream either to take up the debate or even to register the fact that there *is* a debate on what constitutes the social in social psychology. In fact, even Tajfel (1972) accused social psychologists of working in a “social vacuum” and made them responsible for the crisis that hurt social psychology in the 1970s (Fiske & Leyens, 1997).

A part of this is also attributed to the hegemony of the social cognition paradigm. According to Fiske & Taylor (1984) social cognition research is the study of ‘how ordinary people think about people and how they think they think about people.’ As stated by Stroebe & Insko (1989), social cognition research adopts a non-conflictive view of society from the perspective of the individual. It ignores group conflict and group membership and concentrates on an essentially asocial individual

(as cited in McGarty & Haslam, 1997). Fiske & Leyen point at the implications of such an asocietal viewpoint. First, it means that an accurate perception of a given person must necessarily be “individualized.” Everybody should be a part of the majority, and no boundaries are to exist. Second, it means that the investigated groups will be innocuous or only those disturbing groups about whom the majority feels guilty. They conclude that social cognition research adopted an objective anchor, and ignored context “except to the extent it considered a single context that resembled an office with a computer to solve social problems as if they are intellectual ones” (p. 97).

While the above few paragraphs mainly contain commentator’s remarks on the absence of ‘social’ in social psychology, McGarty & Haslam (1997) in their book titled *‘The Message of Social Psychology: Perspectives on Mind in Society’* acknowledge that there are various ways to interpret the “social” in social psychology. In connection to this, Hewstone (1997) refers to the four levels of analysis (Doise, 1986, as cited in McGarty & Haslam, 1997) at which social psychology can and should be studied. These four levels are a) intra-individual, b) inter-individual and situational level, c) social position level and d) ideological level. Doise used this scheme to analyse published works and identified a tendency in social psychological research to limit the analysis to the first and second level (Hewstone, 1997). This points at the need for researchers to delve deeper and spread their attention to realms beyond the individual in an experimental situation and bring in the ‘social’ and ‘ideological’ in social psychology.

In recent times, there has been a similar voice from the feminist critique of the positivist methodological standpoint that is dominant in psychology (and sometimes social psychology). Keller (1985) suggests that many women scientists found it important to establish a relationship between themselves (the subjects of study) and what they were investigating (the objects of study), that is, between the knower and the known (as cited in Teo, 2005). As a theoretical opposition to the traditional concept of objectivity (labelled as *static objectivity*), which separated subject and object, Keller proposed the concept of *dynamic objectivity*, which referred to subjectivity, connectedness, and empathy toward the subject matter. Keller’s criticism of science has immediate relevance for mainstream psychology, which celebrates static objectivity and rejects any attempts to assimilate ideas of dynamic objectivity into the field as unscientific. Code (1993), a philosopher of science, specifically demonstrated the necessity to include researchers’ interests in order to understand the context of

discovery. She, too, challenged the idea that research was value-free, neutral, and objective and argued that scientific inquiry could not be separated from the social and political contexts in which it arose (as cited in Teo, 2005).

Critical theory has a long tradition of identifying shortcomings of positivist perspectives. Habermas (1972) argued that any knowledge was anthropologically founded in interests and that knowledge without interest, knowledge devoid of value, and knowledge lacking ethical-political foundation, did not make sense (as cited in Teo, 2005). Additionally, Horkheimer (1992) criticized positivist theory for not understanding that science takes place in society and for not analysing its social function (as cited in Teo, 2005). For Horkheimer, facts were socially formed through the historical character of the object and the historical character of the perceiving organ, and they change with historical development. Thus, the separation of value and research, knowledge and action, and individual and society should be overcome. Instead of repressing one's values in research, instead of denying that values guide one's research, instead of hiding one's interests, Horkheimer specifically laid out values that should guide critical theory. He envisioned an organization of society that should meet the needs of the whole community, and in the end, should lead to the end of social injustice.

Further, in his presidential address to the American Psychological Association, Miller (1969) implored psychologists to become more relevant to social issues and human welfare. Criticisms were levelled at the pervasive and nearly ubiquitous use of experiments and at participant samples, which almost invariably consisted of undergraduate psychology students (Cook, 1985, as cited in Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2008). Jahoda (1981) argued that "hypothetical relations between precisely defined concepts from which predictions can be deduced", are not suitable for application to complex human phenomena (as cited in Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2008, p. 186).

The extent to which positivism is the focus of the textbooks and acts to celebrate, romanticise, and mythify the positivist history of the discipline can be understood by their treatment and interpretation of some renowned works (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2008). According to most psychological textbooks, in their 1920 study, Watson and Raynor (as cited in Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2008, p. 10) easily created a rat phobia in Little Albert, and his fear readily generalised to all things 'fluffy' and/or white. Yet according to the original paper, Little Albert's fear was difficult to produce, temporary, and was not linked to the colour or texture of objects. Similarly,

Asch's (1951) study had anti-Fascist implications in terms of investigating the circumstances in which people do not conform to the majority rather than when they do. However, the study was 'rewritten' over time because Asch's communist and leftist leanings rendered the paper highly political. In his 1997 work Harris (as cited in Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2008, p. 10) concluded that reframing the research aims and findings promoted the relatively new field of psychology as experimental, empirical, conceptually rigorous, and apolitical, which all served to enhance the ascendancy of the positivist epistemology. And so, as a solution Hewstone (1997) while critiquing the one stop focus on the laboratory experiments method advocates a multiple method approach. He believes that laboratory experiments allied to a probabilistic statistics has paved way for the "royal road to causal inference". Still, he places greater faith in theories that have been tested by multiple methods. Surely, intersecting evidence from multiple methods increases convergent validity (Campbell & Fiske, 1959, as cited in McGarty & Haslam, 1997) and should be a goal to which more researchers should strive. As mentioned in his 1953 book Festinger (as cited in McGarty & Haslam, 1997) believes that the overall research program is best seen as a process of coming and going between the laboratory and the outside world.

To sum up the critique, Gergen (1997) points that the message of psychology in the prevailing *Zeitgeist* was that empirical research can furnish an unbiased and systematic description and explanation of social behaviour, that the accuracy and generality of these theoretical accounts are subject to continuous improvement through research, and that there is nothing so practical for society as an accurate, empirically supported theory (Gergen, 1997). Having come a long way since the 'crisis' was announced over, we are still victims of our disciplinary training that takes science as sacrosanct and dismisses anything that deviates from it. Despite claims that the crisis in psychology is over (e.g., Aronson, 1998, as cited in Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2008), there are commentators who believe that there is still an absence of the 'social' in social psychology. This is precisely what will be presented in Chapter Four by taking research on stereotype threat as a case in point. The next section brings attention to the need for a revision in how we look at the conformity – nonconformity discourse in social psychology. The need for following an altered approach to social influence is emphasised.

2.5 The need for an 'alternative' model: Scope for a Minority influence?

Commentators have criticised the discipline for its one-sided focus on conformity, which has led to the image of the individual as a docile being. In his 1952 paper, Asch (as cited in Haslam & Reicher, 2006) himself, lamented such an understanding in his own text, *Social Psychology*:

'It is a matter of considerable import that there should have grown up in psychology a view that described social action generally in terms of passivity and equated group influence with arbitrary control. The model was an individual deprived of autonomy, one whose actions stemmed not from an inner direction but from external influences forcing themselves upon him and taking control away from him. The initiative belonged to an autocratic suggestor who was either a person in authority or a multitude of persons. The phenomenon that were said to be central in social action were characterized by thoughtlessness and unreasonableness; in fact, it was the intent of the suggestion movement to describe social behaviour as "irrational" in its roots and branches, as synonymous with manipulation. It became an accepted proposition that as a rule men can be induced to believe and act according to dictation and to hold opposed views with equal conviction' (Asch, 1952, pp. 400-401).

Conformity studies were becoming a trend in psychology in the 1950s; and the early 1960s also saw a range of work where social influence, one way or another, became tantamount to conformity. Enter Moscovici (1969), and towards the end of this decade things took a turn to somewhat balance the skew. Works around this time started to concentrate on the ability of a minority, by having a power of its own, to influence the majority in the direction of their judgments. Moscovici (1969) termed this '*minority influence*'. Moscovici, Luge and Naffrechoux (1969) demonstrated this phenomenon by turning Asch's study around; in this case the majority of the participants were to be tested using a minority (confederates) to see if they could be influenced. The study concerned innovation, social pressure exercised by a minority, and tried at the same time to prove that behavioural style is a general source of influence. An objectively blue stimulus was used which two subjects (stooges) out of six who call "green" in the experimental groups. When the behaviour of the minority is consistent, the number of "green" replies in the experimental groups was significantly higher than in the control group. This change in answer was not only a verbal agreement but corresponded to a

change in their perception code, as shown by a colour discrimination test. When the minority's behaviour was not consistent, its impact on the majority was minimal. Therefore it was concluded that it was the *consistent* behavioural style of minorities that ensures the adoption of their point of view. This study gave a completely different perspective to the study of social influence. While the earlier works tended to assume that it is the individual who always asks himself the question – “should I follow the group or the minority?” Moscovici’s study brought to the fore questions like “What should I do so that the majority will adopt my point of view? How can I change the conception of others?”

Differing from the view of conformity being synonymous with social influence, Moscovici, Lage & Naffrechoux (1969) exhibited that we can consider innovation as a form of social influence as well. And history is replete with examples of the minority influencing in a particular situation to bring in social change (e.g. Gandhi in India and Suffragettes in the UK). It is these examples that give us reason to have confidence in the fact that social influence can mean occurrences other than conformity. And so, the need of the hour for social psychology is to broaden its scope by adding issues such as power and social structure under its purview; only then will it do justice to the individual who deals with actual social situations rather than being a habitant of a laboratory that moulds him to act in a malleable fashion to display more cowardice than courage. The main effort required to bring in this change is to shift the approach from a passive model of the human being to an active being capable of bringing social change.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the concept of conformity in the discipline of social psychology and introduced the bias among researchers towards portraying conformity in individuals. The popular and influential studies were introduced and discussed as examples of depicting conformity bias - a tradition that must be replaced by another. The dominance of conformity bias was criticised in terms of a series of concerns that function methodologically and ideologically. Taking cue from the Asch studies on conformity and independence, it gives us an idea of where the norm of interpreting or misinterpreting the studies as conformity studies started. The follow ups and reactions to the ‘conformity study’ were reviewed that presented a whole host of terminologies such as nonconformity, anti-conformity, counter-conformity, strategic conformity etc.

that prove that certain voices of dissent existed. Also, a clarity of what conformity entails and how it is a multitude of concepts was presented in this chapter. These clarifications lead to Chapter three that concerns with conceptualizing the term resistance for the discipline of social psychology. Chapter three draws from the disciplines of sociology, anthropology and political studies that have a dialogue on resistance ensued between them. It will also develop on an argument to take social identity theory as an appropriate framework to studying social resistance.

Chapter 3

Conceptualizing Resistance: An alternative for social psychology

We hope for nonconformists among you, for your sake, for the sake of our nation, for the sake of humanity.

- Paul Tillich, 1957, p.

The previous chapter was an introduction to the concept of conformity and gave an idea of the prevalence of conformity bias in social psychology. It also gave the grounds on which such a bias may be based and thus, critiqued. In particular, the problem of excessive reliance on a positivist paradigm and individualism were highlighted. Also, the attempts to check this one-sided tendency by Moscovici (1969) in his conceptualization of the phenomenon of minority influence were introduced. On the basis of this, the crucial question in this chapter centres around an examination of an alternative to such an approach – one that takes a multiple method approach and studies not just the individual, but the individual who is embedded in a larger social and cultural context of which power dynamics are a central feature. This approach may allow the studies in social psychology to go beyond its ‘conformist’ traditions and move towards a resistance paradigm that looks at the individual as a ‘doer’ – an active agent responsible for his/her own fate. In order to do this, first, the discourse on resistance will be reviewed in the disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology and political studies. Secondly, on the basis of the review, the levels at which resistance has been conceptualized in these disciplines will be analysed; whether it is a micro or a macro level. Thirdly, the basic motives for studying resistance will be discussed; broadly dividing the categories into a) the motive of maintaining the status quo or b) challenging the status quo; this will lead to a discussion on how psychology has tried to pathologize resistance. Lastly, an attempt to conceptualize the term ‘resistance’ for the discipline of psychology will be made. The aim is to move beyond criticism and consider the possible ways that might guide the discipline into a more ‘social’ social psychology.

3.1 Diversity of Resistance – borrowing from other disciplines

In psychology, the term ‘resistance’ has often been used in the context of clinical practice. It was made popular in the 1959 paper by Freud (as cited in Miller & Rollnick 2002), who used the term in reference to patients blocking memories from the conscious memory in order to defend their position in response to confrontation. Gradually, it

came to mean anything a patient did to make therapy less effective. More recently in the field of organizational psychology, resistance has been studied under the topic of change management wherein the term has been used to express the individual's unwillingness to move away from the present state of affairs. Undoubtedly, this is only a partial conceptualization of the phenomenon of resistance to which there definitely is more. More recently, in the area of social psychology, this discussion on resistance has been extended by Haslam & Reicher (2006, 2011, and 2012) who move away from a 'status quo-ist' usage of the term to a 'social change' based definition. Killian & Johnson (2006) have also initiated a study of resistance in the area of identity. They examine the identity negotiation processes of North African immigrant women in France. While the dominant view is that identities are imposed by others, Killian & Johnson with the aid of the "Not-Me" identity framework argue that people can redefine and refuse labels that seem to be self-evident and to lack room for negotiation; thereby, resisting others' attempts to categorize them as immigrants. Killian and Johnson (2006) find that North African immigrant women in France occasionally refuse an immigrant identity by saying, "I'm not an immigrant!", which is a "Not-Me" identity. This conceptualization in the field of social psychology will be discussed in detail in the later sections of this chapter; but before that a review of other social science disciplines to understand the conceptualization of the term resistance may give a perspective and some reflections on what it could mean for social psychology.

The effort of conceptualizing the term 'resistance' for the social psychology would be based on the earlier conceptualizations mainly in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, women's studies and political studies. For this, articles from journals like *Sociological Forum*, *The American Historical Review*, *American Anthropologist*, *British Journal of Sociology* and *Educational Researcher* were reviewed. Hollander & Einwohner's (2004) review article titled 'Conceptualizing Resistance' in the journal *Sociological Forum* forms the main basis for this section. In their review, Hollander & Einwohner point at the rapid proliferation of scholarship on resistance but the little consensus on its definition. They look at the core elements common to most uses of the concept and also two central dimensions on which the use varies; these are the question of whether resistance must be recognized by others and whether it should be intentional. The term resistance has been used to describe a variety of actions and behaviours at all levels of human social life (individual, collective, and institutional) and in a number of different settings, including political systems,

entertainment and literature, and the workplace. Everything from revolutions (Goldstone, 1991, as cited in Hollander & Einwohner, 2004; Scott, 1985) to hairstyles (Weitz, 2001) has been described as resistance. Given this variation, there ought to be little consensus on the definition of resistance. The term has been defined differently in different disciplines. For example, in the area of women's studies, Gregg (1993) defines it as "acting autonomously in one's own interests". Profitt (1996), in the area of social work describes it as "active efforts to oppose, fight, and refuse to cooperate with or submit to abusive behaviours and control". Yet another description is given by Carr (1998) who with reference to the social psychological gender theory conceptualizes resistance as "engaging in behaviours despite opposition" (as cited in Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). Roachat and Modigliani (1995) use "questioning and objecting" in referring to the term resistance. This gives an idea of the complexity of this term. In fact, Hollander & Einwohner (2004) also note that most published work on resistance has displayed a lack of attention to definitions and have tended to use the term without any conceptualization in their work. For this reason, Weitz (2001) writes, "the term resistance remains loosely defined, allowing some scholars to see it almost everywhere and others almost nowhere" (p. 669).

Hollander & Einwohner's (2004) review recognizes several themes based on the diverse behaviours and settings that resistance is found in. One of these is the *mode* in which the resistance is salient; and the most commonly studied mode of resistance is material or physical, involving the resisters use of their bodies or other material objects. At a broader level, resistance is most readily thought to refer to social movements (even protests and contentious politics); and so, activities associated with these phenomenon such as marches, vigils, formation of organizations also fall into this category. In his analysis, Scott (1985) observes that physical acts of resistance could include behaviours as dramatic as violence or as subtle as working slowly, feigning sickness, wearing particular types of clothing, or stealing from one's employer. However, other authors have also described modes such as talk and symbolic behaviour, for example traditional stories and dance. Furthermore, silence as well as breaking silence is characterized as a form of resistance in certain studies (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004).

Another theme that emerges in Hollander & Einwohner's review is that of the *scale* of resistance. Acts of resistance may be individual or collective, widespread or locally confined. The *level of coordination* among resisters or the extent of them purposefully acting together is a related theme; while group level protests require more

coordination, individual level resistance can take place with little or no coordination (Prasad & Prasad, 1998, as cited in Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). The *targets* of resistance may also vary from an individual to groups or organizations to institutions and social structures. An additional theme is the *direction* or *goals* of resistance. Resistance can work both to achieve change and to curtail change. For example, in the case of “cultural resistance” in minority communities’ attempts to preserve the minority culture against assimilation into the host culture (Moghissi, 1999, as cited in Hollander & Einwohner, 2004).

Hollander & Einwohner (2004) in their review, found two elements common to all uses of the term ‘resistance’. First, mostly all used it to include a sense of action; for example, definitions like “expressive behaviour that inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or prevents alternatives to cultural codes” (Pitts, 1998, as cited in Hollander & Einwohner, 2004) and “actions involving consciousness, collective action, and direct challenges to structures of power (Rubin, 1996, as cited in Hollander & Einwohner, 2004) presumes some kind of action. A second element common to all uses of the term was in a sense of opposition. In the above two examples this sense appears in the use of words “contradict”, “prevent”, and “challenge”.

Apart from these common elements, the point of difference centred around two core issues – *recognition* and *intent*. The issue of the visibility of the resistant act is the first area of disagreement. While earlier works on resistance which focused on large scale movements took for granted that resistance is visible and easily recognized as resistance, Scott’s (1985) research on peasant politics challenged this conceptualization by drawing attention to “everyday resistance”. According to Scott, powerless people rarely have the resources to resist openly against their super-ordinate, instead they indulge in relatively ordinary weapons like foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, feigned ignorance, sabotage and so on. These techniques may often go unnoticed by the powerful and so the question of recognition comes in. According to Hollander & Einwohner, although visibility seems a necessary prerequisite to recognition, often resisters may manipulate their behaviour in order to encourage or discourage recognition. Some acts are overtly oppositional, yet unrecognized because they are deliberately hidden from view. In contrast, other acts are observable yet not necessarily recognized as resistant by the powerful (for e.g. Scott’s “everyday forms resistance”). Therefore, the goal of the resistor in the resistance act is also vital. Some resistance is intended to be recognized, while other resistance is purposefully concealed

or obfuscated (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). On the other hand, discussions centred on the issue of intent have been addressed by theorists in three ways. Some suggest that the actor's intention is the key to classifying resistance behaviour. Scott (1985) and Leblanc (1999) argue that intent is a better indicator than recognition because acts of resistance do not always achieve a desired effect. Another group contends that assessing intent is often difficult, for people may intend to resist but lie in an interview; this is most probable in the case of oppressed people for who public resistance may be dangerous. The third group of theorists suggest that actor's intentions are not central to understanding something as resistance; instead they argue that the actors may not even be conscious of their action as resistance. Culture plays an important role here as the same actions could have completely different meanings across cultures. Anthropologists (e.g. Hoffman, 1999; Groves & Chang, 1999) have more to contribute in terms of culture and resistance. For example, Groves & Chang both took ethnographic work with Filipina domestic workers in Honk Kong, but the first author interpreted their behaviour as childish and deferent, while the second author interpreted the same behaviours as resistance (as cited by Hollander & Einwohner, 2004).

According to Hollander & Einwohner (2004) there is considerable scholarly disagreement about whether all actions described in resistance studies are, in fact, resistance. They believe that these disagreements have occurred mostly among anthropologists (e.g. Brown, 1996; Hoffman, 1999) and political scientists (E.g. McCann and March, 1996; Rubin, 1996). Sociologists, in contrast, have largely discussed resistance without explicitly engaging the definitional issues, fostering ambiguity and discontinuity in this area. However, based on their review, Hollander & Einwohner (2004) suggest different types of resistance based on the actor's intention, and recognition of the act by targets and observers (as shown in Table 3.1).

This typology, according to Hollander & Einwohner (2004), brings in to focus sociological issues that have been missing in the definitional debates on resistance. As per Hollander & Einwohner there has been a spurt of researches with resistance as its core, making it a fashionable topic to work on, however, there remains a vagueness in its utility.

Table 3.1: Types of Resistance

	Is act intended as resistance by actor?	Is act recognized as resistance by	
		target?	observer?
Overt resistance	Yes	Yes	Yes
Covert resistance	Yes	No	Yes
Unwitting resistance	No	Yes	Yes
Target-defined resistance	No	Yes	No
Externally-defined resistance	No	No	Yes
Missed resistance	Yes	Yes	No
Attempted resistance	Yes	No	No
Not resistance	No	No	No

Source: Hollander & Einwohner (2004) p. 544

The above paragraphs give a brief summary of the content that resistance research entails mainly in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology and political science. Beyond the review by Hollander & Einwohner (2004), there have been efforts to conceptualize resistance in ways other than the usual. For instance, in the discipline of political science, Cohen (2004) attempts to explore a new research agenda for Black politics that sees deviance as resistance. He stresses the importance of constructing a field of investigation that is centred on the experiences of those who “stand on the (out)side of state-sanctioned, normalized, White, middle- and upper-class, male heterosexuality.” (p. 27). He believes that this should lead to the inclusion of previously silenced and absent members of our communities, expanding our understanding of who constitutes (Black) communities and reconstructing the boundaries of membership and identity. Another implication of centring on deviance is that it would generate new theories and models of power, agency, and resistance in the lives of largely marginal people, cognizant of the different intents involved in defiant acts and acts of politicized resistance.

Another prominent work in the area that has not been cited in Hollander & Einwohner’s review is that of Foucault (1979, as cited in Pickett, 1996), who believed that where there is oppression or inequity, there will inevitably be resistance or challenges to oppression as well. Resistance, therefore, can be seen as the “flip side” of reproduction, where dominant beliefs, and ideologies that maintain structured inequities are challenged and weakened (Shaw, 2001). The multiplicity of the phenomenon of resistance can also be understood by the way Foucault changed his usage of term from "contestation" and "transgression" in the 1960s to "struggle" and

"resistance" in the 1960s and 1970s, though he did use "agonism" on occasion (Pickett, 1996). In his book *Discipline and Punish* (1979), Foucault conveys that power is universal and not centred in only specific individuals, groups or institutions. With reference to his views on the relationship between power and resistance, Foucault sees resistance as the odd element within power relations. According to Pickett (1996), resistance is what threatens power, hence it stands against power as an adversary. Although resistance is also a potential resource for power, the elements or materials that power works upon are never rendered fully docile. Something always eludes the diffusion of power and expresses itself as indocility and resistance (Pickett, 1996). Related to the discussion on power and resistance, Barbalet (1985) brings to notice the fact that in Weber's analysis, power and resistance are distinct but interdependent aspects of power relations. Barbalet believes that the distinction between power and resistance remains obscure for theories which emphasize the formal properties of power and ignore its social context. The exercise of power over others draws upon social resources not available to subordinate agents. Nevertheless, those subject to power can mobilize other social resources in a contribution to power relations through resistance. In limiting power, resistance influences the outcome of power relations (Barbalet, 1985).

An interesting piece of work on resistance by Mahoney & Yngvesson (1992) integrates feminist anthropology and psychology to understand how the subjectivity and paradox of resistance are constructed. They argue that an explanation of resistance must account for how the motivation to resist is constructed psychologically and emphasize that an explanation of resistance requires a theory of the subject as not being simply produced in relations of power but as making meanings in her relationships with others. In understanding both creativity and conformity, they emphasize the importance of the context not only of an acting or speaking subject but of a reacting or listening subject as well.

The paragraphs above give an idea of the vast literature on resistance in social science disciplines. As is clear, resistance is a multifaceted term and it would be unfair to give a clear cut definition of the term as if it was black or white; it definitely is more puzzling than it seems. The extent of this vastness can be perceived from Sahlins' (1993) statement when he says that "resistance today can be considered the new functionalism, an intellectual black hole into which all kinds of cultural contents get sucked, a discursive practice that succeeds in translating the apparently trivial into the

fatefully political” (p. 16, as cited in Brown, 1996). Echoing a similar sentiment, Brown (1996) writes, “If there is any hegemony today, it is the theoretical hegemony of resistance” (p. 729). The question that Montenegro (as cited in Haslam & Reicher, 2011) in his 2004 paper, then, asks is that why has social psychology become preoccupied with oppression while ignoring the individual’s or group’s capacity to resist? Is it because of the methodological constraints of the discipline or something else? The following sections will be an effort to unravel this question.

3.2 “Absence” of Resistance from Social Psychological Literature

As mentioned before, social psychology has clearly ignored aspects of social influence where individuals or groups could possibly be shown as opposing majority’s influence or resisting in situations of tyranny. However, the fact that it has been ignored does not mean that it is not present. And so, a crucial aspect around which this dissertation centres is to understand this lack of a conceptualization of resistance or acknowledging whatever little there is of it, in the mainstream. As mentioned in the previous chapter, certain disciplinary features may, at times, act as limitations for the study of certain issues. Keeping this in mind, this section will focus on drawing out some of the disciplinary characteristics that may have been responsible for this negligence.

3.2.1 Levels of Analysis and Method

The prime factors that determine the subject matter of a discipline have to be the level at which analyses take place and its methodological approach. As mentioned in chapter two, there have been reductionist tendencies in the discipline of psychology in the way the theories explain human behaviour. Also, from the above section on conceptualization of the term ‘resistance’ it becomes clear that the way psychology employs the term is quite a contrast from other social science disciplines like sociology, anthropology and political studies. This difference in level of analysis is closely associated with the methodological perspective that these disciplines take and can be clearly deciphered from the kind of studies they undertake. For instance, for the vast majority of social psychologists, experimentalism is *the* method of choice which necessitates an individualistic emphasis to the phenomenon in question. This is true not just of psychology in general, but social psychology has also leaned towards giving individualistic explanations for the study of social actions. In relation to this, Tajfel

(1972) in the essay "Experiments in Vacuum" criticised the extant perspectives in social psychology for adopting reductionist meta-theories that had, he argued, rendered them incapable of adequately explaining wide-scale social processes (Condor, 2003). Higbee, Millard & Folkman (1982) note that traditional social psychology reduces social life to a series of intra-psychic-individual variables; thereby losing any real notion of the social (as cited in Tuffin, 2005). Tuffin (2005) reports that even a cursory examination of textbook definitions will highlight the degree to which individualism forms a core aspect of the way in which the discipline is conceptualised. In his 1996 paper Franzoi (as cited in Tuffin, 2005) charges the discipline with attempting to understand how *individuals* are influenced by others. This trend can also be observed in the classics mentioned in chapter two, for e.g. in the case of Milgram's obedience studies, it is the individual who ultimately becomes the unit of analysis. Milgram attempted to explain the unexpectedly high levels of obedience by reference to individual states of being. According to Tuffin (2005), Milgram suggested that people can fall into an agentic state whereby individual autonomy is suspended while the person acts as the agent for another. Similarly Asch (1952) through an experimental analysis showed that a majority of individuals may at times (though not all the time), force a minority to alter a decision of what is right or wrong. Such explanations ignore the broader social and political influences and (again) position the primary explanation firmly within the individual (Tuffin, 2005, p. 51). Instead of seeing the influence of the larger social context and the power and politics that are a part of it, influencing the individual; psychological literature has mostly been interested only in how individuals influence other individuals; taking the aspect of power, politics and other factors of the social realm totally out of the picture. In his 1995 work, Hayes (1995, as cited in Tuffin, 2005) notes, reductionism is 'both negative and misleading in the way that it ignores all the other levels of explanation' (p. 16).

While it is true that individuals are part of the larger social groups, the disciplinary division between psychology and sociology has seen psychology adopt the individual as the standard unit of analysis, while sociology has focused on groups and society at large (Tuffin, 2005). This focus of sociology on the society at large can be seen from the methodological standpoint and the sample it chooses to study. For instance, in a study in the area of sociology, Kuumba & Ajanaku (1998) trace the culture of growing dreadlocks which started with the Rastafarian movement in Africa as a symbol to form oppositional collective identities associated with the African liberation

or Black power movements. Now, instead of trying to understand how individuals influence each other in such a situation, this study takes the dreadlocked individuals as sample to understand this symbol in their use to form a collective identity to resist as part of a Black liberation movement. This makes sure that the community as a collective and not the individual becomes the object of study. The role of method becomes clear here. Despite being a micro level sociological study, the methods that it employs include self-administered surveys, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and a focus group. To get into the reality of a movement of this level and to grasp its richness may not be possible following the positivistic and reductionist perspective that psychology follows. In fact, according to Tajfel (1972), more than the method itself, it is the interpretation that was at the root of the problem. He criticized the tendency of social psychologists to treat the experimental episode as if it were in a “social vacuum”, in which the norms and values that normally guided human social behaviour no longer operated. So, unlike social psychology, in the discipline of anthropology and sociology, Healey (1999) foregrounds the complex and ambiguous nature of resistance strategies and the accompanying conflicting subjectivities of Malay women living in coastal peninsular Malaysia in the late 1980s. Here again, the unit of analysis as is clear from the title of the article '*Gender, Power and the Ambiguities of Resistance in a Malay Community of Peninsular Malaysia*' is the community and not the individual. A distinct feature of this article is that unlike social psychological studies, it devotes almost two pages to present the national context to the reader, thereby giving the larger picture and moving the scale of analysis from the individual to the social. Again in the discipline of sociology, Vail & White (1983) trace the roots of resistance to European imperialism and colonialism in Africa with the help of literature (fiction) of those times. They note that songs and poetry are also accepted as appropriate media for discussing the impact of power.

Another influential work from the discipline of sociology that has been done in the area of resistance is that by James Scott. Scott (1985) introduced the idea that oppression and resistance are in constant flux, and that by focusing on visible historic 'events' such as organised rebellions or collective action we can easily miss subtle but powerful forms of 'every day resistance'. Scott analysed resistance at the level of peasant and slave societies and not mere individuals. He looked at their ways of responding to domination, with a focus not on observable acts of rebellion but on forms of cultural resistance and non-cooperation that are employed over a course of time.

Through his analysis Scott looked at less visible, every-day forms of resistance such as ‘foot-dragging, evasion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander and sabotage’. Resistance, for Scott, is a subtle form of contesting ‘public transcripts’ by making use of prescribed roles and language to resist the abuse of power – including things like ‘rumour, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures, and anonymity’. These forms of resistance are used by both individuals and groups to resist without directly confronting or challenging elite norms. Further, applying the theory of everyday forms of peasant resistance (EFPR) by Scott, another study investigates land struggles in the Ecuadorean Andes. It explores the effectiveness of ‘weapons of the weak’ used by indigenous peasants in conflicts with the haciendas (Korovkin, 2000). These works make it clear that any study of resistance requires the researcher to move out of the comforts of the laboratory and study more than the individual so that richer sources of data can be accessed.

As mentioned by Tuffin (2005) in his book *Understanding Critical Psychology*, “the discipline of psychology has grappled with the tensions between the universal and the individual. Traditionally, both nomothetic and idiographic methods have been used, with the former most famously represented by the experiment, and the latter being more likely to be represented by the case study. The overarching goal of the experiment is to establish universal laws while the aim of the case study is to understand the detailed workings of the individual.” For the present context, this debate still seems pointless for whichever of the two overrules, the problem in the discipline remains. If the nomothetic approach is followed, the experiments will take precedence, which brings us back to the issue of positivist paradigm that makes it likely to study only certain kinds of situations and give only a part of the explanations of social phenomenon. On the other hand, if the idiographic approach becomes primary, again, the explanations will remain at the level of the individual. The discussions ought to move beyond the idiographic – nomothetic divide.

A similar debate has ensued in the area of social psychology which has continually struggled with the idea of what should the appropriate unit of analysis be. This has happened mainly because social psychologists also have an interest in understanding collectives and groups and hence, fall somewhere between the core psychology and sociology disciplines. But as can be seen from the vast literature of psychology and social psychology, the privilege has always been given to the positivist methodology. Tuffin points out another drawback of this positivist/individualist

approach, he believes that although "...data supplied by any particular individual in an experiment becomes aggregated. This pooling of data is justified on the grounds that it increases the power and generalizability of results, but this is achieved at a cost. Namely, that such data collection and aggregation involves losing sight of the individual contribution. That which is most prized becomes submerged in wider processes of data collection." Mainstream contemporary social psychology provides a fairly standard methodological (and ideological) treatment of these issues. In short, the social becomes regarded as nothing more than the sum of the individuals. This approach leaves the individual as the preferred unit through which problems should be studied – and leaves social psychology's rampant individualism unchallenged (Tuffin, 2005). On the other hand, critical social psychologists are acutely aware that such notions of individuality are peculiar in the context of the history of ideas and cultures of the world (Geertz, 1979, as cited in Tuffin, 2005). Parker (1992a) points out that traditional social psychology is premised on the promise of linking the individual and the social. This promise remains unfulfilled, and there are strong suggestions that while rampant individualism dominates, social psychology will never fully become a social discipline (as cited in Tuffin, 2005, p. 53). Similarly, Stainton Rogers *et al.* (1995) have suggested that mainstream social psychology is based on a very narrow understanding of what social means (as cited in Tuffin, 2005). They analysed a number of key social psychological topics to show how all serve to reinforce the message that our productivity and efficiency are disrupted by the influence of others. As can be seen from the stark difference between sociological literature on resistance and psychological literature that has relatively little trace of resistance, there is marked effect of reductionist, individualised accounts such that they do not allow holistic social explanations since the onus is always on the individual.

It is important to note that moving in tandem with the idea of individuation was the notion of the group as "malicious". A large part of this can be attributed to G.W. Allport (1924) who characterized what he called the "group fallacy" as the error of postulating "... a kind of 'collective mind' or 'group consciousness' as separate from the minds of the individuals of whom the group is composed" (p. 4). In consequence, according to Allport, "group mind" theorists mistakenly attempt to explain "social phenomena in terms of the group as a whole. Whereas the true explanation is to be found only in its component parts, the individuals" (Greenwood, 2000). Immersion in a group was seen to undermine the constraints that normally operate upon people when

they act as individuals. In addition, when those groups have power at their disposal, this is believed to encourage extreme antisocial behaviour (Zimbardo, 1969, as cited in Haslam & Reicher, 2006). What is still a shame is that socially held and engaged forms of cognition, emotion, and behaviour continue to be disparaged as forms of “conformity,” “obedience,” and “group-think” (Marcus & Kitayama, 1994). To this Reicher (1996) asserts that even if some groups are tyrannical, group action is also the basis on which people gain the strength and confidence to resist, to challenge, and even to overthrow tyranny.

Stam *et al.* (1998) advance the criticism that social psychology’s blind adherence to experimentalism has resulted in people having been artificially removed from the study of social life altogether. Stam *et al.* also suggest that social psychology has taken individualism to such an extreme that it is now about individuals who do not exist (as cited in Tuffin, 2005). More often than not, the explanations of social phenomenon are reduced to explanations that work only at the individual level. This problem of individualism also limits the horizons of research and its applicability in social psychology. The weakness involved in relying on individualised accounts is that they draw attention away from other, more systemic solutions. Gergen refers to this as ‘an obtuse simplification of our ills’ (p. 122), which constrains analysis of particular problems to the simple view that problems reside within individuals and solutions should therefore be aimed at the same level (Tuffin, 2005). The bottom line is that for social psychology to have any conceptualization of resistance, it is imperative that the phenomenon be studied not just at the individual but also at the group/social level.

3.2.2 Psychology’s role in pathologizing resistance: To maintain or challenge status quo?

According to the Dictionary of American English Usage (Nicholson, 1957, as cited by Prilleltensky, 1989), the term status quo refers to ‘the position in which things are.’ Mainstream psychology courses typically teach the status quo: the currently accepted methodologies, assumptions and theories (Nightingale & Neilands, 1997, as cited in Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997). Since this work broadly comes under the area of critical social psychology, a discussion on the status quo cannot be left out. As Nightingale & Neilands put it, “critical psychology and the status quo coexist in a yin-yang relationship: critical psychology would not exist without a status quo foil, but mainstream psychology would not grow and change for better without critical input

leading to improved methods and practices” (p. 69). Although the aim of critical psychology has been to offer alternatives to the mainstream; the process does not always run smoothly. As with most systems, often, critical ideas are met with opposition and the silos remains. As is evident from the state of affairs in mainstream psychology, there is a long way to go before the status quo is challenged and critical ideas accepted. Closely related to the issue of status quo, is the topic of social influence; and with reference to social influence, what is appalling is that not only has resistance been ignored, but also renamed and relabelled. There is ample evidence that psychology has consciously worked towards giving different names to what might have been resistance; from anti-conformity, net conformity, nonconformity and counter conformity to independence – all possible terms except resistance come to the fore. What one might have intended to be an act of resistance is carefully denoted “deviance”. What might have been a resistance to the so called “normal” is designated “abnormal” in the field of abnormal psychology. Though this argument may seem to be a digression from the topic of study, it holds immense meaning for understanding the question at hand. The discussion in the previous section, where the disciplines “methodological individualism” and narrowness in prescribing to a level of analysis is discussed, forms a firm mainstay to this one and is somewhat interconnected.

Reviewing literatures from varied disciplines of the social sciences puts certain things into perspective. There is an overthrow of resistance studies in disciplines like sociology and anthropology, however, mainstream social psychology remain silent about it. While one of the reasons for this has already been discussed in the section above, another possible cause comes from the stark difference in the disciplines’ approach towards the social status quo. Although it would not be completely true to say that social psychology has disregarded anything that smells of resistance; whatever little conceptualization exists (except the European literature, Tajfel, 1979; Haslam & Reicher, 2006, 2011, 2012), is in terms of maintaining the status quo. There is ample evidence of this in literature on organizational psychology which talks of resistance only in terms of resistance to change (e.g. Bovey & Hede, 2001; Dent & Goldberg, 1999). Instead, in sociological literature, the use of resistance has mostly been with reference to bringing in social change and altering the state of affairs (e.g. Scott, 1985; Kuumba & Ajanaku, 1998; Vail & White, 1983).

The reason status quo maintenance is not debated in traditional psychology is because historically, mainstream psychology has adopted an apolitical stance

(Prilleltensky, 1989). Most of the time, there is a professional or political motive behind preserving the status quo by means of supporting particular forms of knowledge or ideologies while rejecting or ignoring others. For example, Cattell (1890) stressed on the use of psychological tests for intelligence so as to maintain the “science” model within psychology. According to him, “psychology cannot attain the certainty and exactness of the physical sciences, unless it rests on a foundation of experiment and measurement.” (p. 373). Therefore, it is to be understood that what becomes an explicit part of a disciplinary discourse and what is kept tacit is a function of the kind of ideology the individuals at power want maintained in the society. Psychology is abundant with instances of such status quo-ist approaches. Among the mainstream, apart from social psychology another branch of psychology that helps build the argument against the status quo is that of abnormal psychology (among others). But before expanding on the abnormal psychology standpoint, it is important to understand the usage of language in this context. As is promulgated by the social constructionist perspective, language is not just a neutral tool, rather it highlights certain aspects of the object it represents (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1997, as cited in Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997). And it is because of this feature of language that labelling plays a crucial factor. The broad political repercussions of labelling as a means of social control have been succinctly articulated by Scheff (1976) who claimed that:

To the extent that medical science lends its name to the labelling of nonconformity as mental illness, it is giving legitimacy to the social status quo (Scheff, 1976, p. 215, as cited in Prilleltensky, 1990).

Or as Dean *et al.* (1976) observed:

When used to support the status quo, labelling is a mechanism of social control – a device for restoring or maintaining the social order (Dean *et al.*, 1976, p. 193, as cited in Prilleltensky, 1994).

According to Prilleltensky (1990), two sharply contrasting political uses have been made of labelling theory and research. Left-wing interpretations indict the mental health establishment as a sophisticated means of social control. Right-wing interpretations indict the establishment on charges of furnishing an “excuse” for deviant

individual. The proliferation of the term 'disease' and the medicalization of social deviance for purposes of social control are widely documented phenomena in our culture (e.g. Scheff, 1976, as cited in Prilleltensky, 1994). The notion of mental illness has been strategically utilized as a nonjudicial mode of treating social deviants, political dissidents, and nonconformists not only in the communist bloc (Fireside, 1979; Medvedev and Medvedev, 1971) but also in the North American society (e.g., Foucault, 1985) (p. 772). In the branch of abnormal psychology, that follows the medical – asocial model, the role played by "out of the skin" elements in the genesis and reproduction of the person's actions is deemphasized. This trend has begun to gain renewed vigour through cognitive therapy, whereby a mind cure is primarily called for, often at the expense of careful consideration of societal solutions (Prilleltensky, 1990). Since the entire onus for the maladaptive state is left to the internal mechanisms of the individual, social preventive action remains out of question and the status quo prevails. This growing fascination of psychology has been critiqued at various levels, Kitzinger (1987) criticises psychological explanations on the grounds that they 'perpetuate the status quo through an insistent emphasis on individual responsibility, internal causation and individual solutions to problems' (as cited in Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997). Likewise, Collier, Minton and Reynolds (1991) question the relevance of the traditional research agenda within social psychology and argue for overhauling 'the political message that traditional social psychology, by its uncritical acceptance of existing social relations, tends to promote and maintain the status quo' (as cited in Tuffin, 2005).

This state has been maintained in the field of mainstream social psychology for a long time. Recently, psychologists of various orientations have become increasingly and justifiably concerned with psychology's witting or unwitting strengthening of the societal status quo (e.g. Albee, 1986; Prilleltensky, 1989). The area that concerns itself with such issues has mainly been that of critical social psychology, which has attempted to bring in the 'political' into the scenario. Critical researchers have engaged with politics and have advocated for social and psychological change. This style of work presents a direct challenge to the status quo and is evident in the texts by Fox and Prilleltensky (1997), and Prilleltensky and Nelson (2002). The work of Prilleltensky and Nelson provides the most recent example, in which they examine the political implications of the work of psychologists with a view to introducing new approaches to training, research and psychological practice.

It is interesting to note that while in the discipline of political science there has been an attempt to see deviance as resistance (e.g. Cohen, 2004), in psychology (and social psychology) what could have been resistance is usually labelled deviance and swept under the carpet. Anthropological literature captures a radical form of resistance that relates experience to the body. Kleinman (1994, as cited in Behi, 2008, p.716), for instance, argues that pain and chronic illnesses are forms of resistance against forces of domination. Kleinman ascribes two different aspects of resistance as manifestations of bodily pain: resistances as existential processes in which suffering is the result of resistance to the lived flow of experience, and resistance to political domination, which may be active struggles against such forces or passive forms of noncompliance (1994, p.174). In the context of Brazil, Scheper-Hughes (1993, p.195) argues that the folk illness of *nervos*, *nervosa*, or *doença de nervos*, is a condition of extreme nervousness—a common and potentially fatal psychosomatic folk syndrome—which has become an idiom through which the body experiences and acts out every day social injustices and economic hardships. The *nervos* discloses the ways in which victims fall into a state of self-blame in the face of structural weaknesses of the social, economic, and legal order. At the same time, the bodily manifestation of *nervos* allows patients to transgress everyday speech norms and voice their anger and discontent. Realizing the futility of engaging in political protest, they are left with the possibility to express their discontents into the *nervos*/hidden transcript of the body (in Behi, 2008). But psychology has largely remained aloof from such debates. Instead of looking at real forms of resistance, psychology has gone to the extent of naturalizing oppression. For instance, Zimbardo and colleagues explained their findings by commenting that guard aggression ‘was emitted simply as a ‘natural’ consequence of being in the uniform of a ‘guard’ and asserting the power inherent in that role’ (Haney *et al.*, 1973, p. 12, as cited in Haslam & Reicher, 2006). According to Haslam & Reicher (2006), this unwillingness to undertake studies that create, manipulate and systematically investigate the effects of social environments on human interaction can be seen to have contributed to the increasing dominance of explanations based upon inherent and essentially unavoidable genetic, biological, or psychological propensities. Albee (1986, 1990) has cogently argued that, for as long as psychologists continue to believe that mental illness, criminal tendencies, and low intelligence derive mainly from a deficient organism, early compensatory education programs and primary prevention programs in general will never be satisfactorily implemented. To the extent that branches of

psychology have contributed to the creation and perpetuation of the asocial perspective, they have contributed to the maintenance of the social status quo.

However, there is one theory in social psychology that goes closest to being called a theory of resistance – the social identity theory (SIT). The social identity approach in social psychology was initiated in the early 1970's by the work of Henri Tajfel and his colleagues on intergroup processes. The most significant feature of the social identity approach is that following this approach the individual (which is what mainstream psychology generally deals with) is started to be seen as a part of a larger social group, for people define themselves as members of a social group and not as mere individuals living in a void. Reicher, Spears & Haslam (2010) elaborate on the term 'social identity' by stressing the sociality of the construct in at least three ways. 'First, social identity is a relational term, defining who we are as a function of our similarities and differences with others. Second, social identity is shared with others and provides a basis for shared social action. Third, the meanings associated with any social identity are products of our collective history and present. Social identity is therefore something that links us to the social world. It provides the pivot between the 'individual and society' (as cited in Wetherell & Mohanty, 2010, p. 45-46). One of the foundations to this approach was its focus on the social context, and because of this reason it seems to give an understanding of the dynamics of resistance and change — especially in situations of intergroup inequality. With its base on the minimal group paradigm (Tajfel, 1979, as cited in Reicher, Spears & Haslam, 2010), this theory proposes that individuals can define themselves through the groups to which they belong. In this way it accomplishes to explain the individual along with the social. Reicher *et al.* (2010) posit that it is wrong to believe that the SIT is a theory of discrimination. In fact they call it a theory of resistance to discrimination. Tajfel suggested that people may have a general desire for positive self-esteem and to be positively differentiated from out-groups, but these dynamics do not operate in a social vacuum (Reicher *et al.*, 2010). This is where the aspect of social change and stimulating the status quo comes in. In the explanation of the psychology and strategies of low-status groups, this perspective points to two sets of factors that are critical to understanding how subordinate group members react to their position. The first, i.e. *permeability* relates to individuals' beliefs about their ability to improve their status despite their group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The second factor – perceived security of intergroup relations has two parts to it – *legitimacy and stability*.

Accordingly, it is predicted that individuals will be most inclined to work together to resist domination when they share the view that inequality is both illegitimate and unstable and these views generate an envisaged set of cognitive alternatives. Reicher *et al.* (2010) paraphrase Tajfel & Turner's (1979) work: "When group boundaries are permeable (i.e., so that group memberships are not fixed), one obvious solution is for members of low-status groups to disavow this group membership and attempt to move into a higher-status group. This is referred to as a strategy of *social mobility* or "exit". When boundaries are impermeable different strategies are required. One course of action is to adopt a *social creativity* strategy that involves reconstructing the meaning of one's existing (low-status) group position. This can be done in at least three ways: either (a) by seeking to compare the in-group with other groups that are even more disadvantaged, (b) by evaluating the in-group on more flattering dimensions of comparison, or (c) by attempting to redefine the meaning of the in-groups membership" (p. 57). It is precisely because collective action is the sole resource through which the powerless can challenge their subjugation that Tajfel and his successors focused on group processes (p. 51). In this way, Tajfel's theory gave a differing perspective to the then existing theories in social psychology that left all responsibility on the individual. Taking the social identity perspective as the backdrop for social influence processes will lead us to Moscovici's (1972) aim of "seeing the development of a science of 'movement' rather than a science of 'order'". Since, in the social world, there are inequalities wherein certain groups in the society are more privileged than others who may be negatively valued, it becomes imperative that the social identity model be followed, for it concerns with how psychological dynamics operate within differently structured social worlds and how these dynamics lead people to act together in order to change their social world. Tajfel's work can be considered one the first and few conceptualizations of resistance in psychology.

Basis the review of studies on resistance in various social science disciplines like social psychology, sociology, anthropology etc. it can be said that there clearly is a dissimilarity in their usage of the term. While social psychological explanations serve to maintain status quo, examples of studies in other disciplines are replete with real examples of social resistance that aimed at bringing social change.

3.3 Conceptualizing resistance for social psychology

A number of commentators have observed that as it has evolved as a discipline, social psychology has become preoccupied with the psychology of oppression (Turner, 2006, as cited in Haslam & Reicher, 2012). Resistance on the other hand has been prudently ignored. In other disciplines like anthropology, sociology and political science though, resistance studies have been dominant, so much so that Brown (1996) writes, “If there is any hegemony today, it is the theoretical hegemony of resistance.” These extremities in disciplines of social sciences – sociology, anthropology and political science on one hand and psychology on the other – therefore, seem worth studying so as to understand why such a major difference has occurred. As will be shown in the later paragraphs, all is not the way it seems.

The first section of the previous chapter contained brief descriptions of classic studies in psychology that in some way or the other propagated a conformity bias. The three main ones out of these are the studies by Asch (1952), popularly known the conformity studies, the Stanford prison study (Zimbardo, 1971) and obedience studies (Milgram, 1974). Although Asch’s work is a special case since he devoted equal attention to independence, but it eventually came to be represented by subsequent theorists as conformity studies and so, has been categorized under and taken as an example to illustrate conformity bias. The other two examples are clear representations of conformity bias. Even though social psychology has mostly shied away from acknowledgement of or reference to the phenomenon of resistance, in this section the attempt will be to show that resistance existed, in these very studies that have been dubbed as studies on conformity.

Though Asch is considered a pioneer of conformity studies that he conducted in the 1950s, this section will be most beneficial if the discussion is started by the work of Zimbardo’s Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE) (1971) as it is the study most recently revisited by social psychologists Haslam & Reicher in what has been called the BBC prison study, the results of which were first published as *Rethinking the Psychology of Tyranny* (2006), which provided more details to the findings of Zimbardo’s prison study. The study explores the social and psychological consequences of putting people in groups of unequal power. It examines the conditions under which individuals accept or challenge inequality. The context of this study remained somewhat similar to the original; 15 men were randomly selected to be either prisoners or guards put in a simulated prison environment for an eight day period. The findings of the BBC prison

study, which contrasted quite a bit from the Stanford prison study, suggest that the guards did not “naturally” conform to the role. Moreover, the manipulations that served to increase a sense of shared identity among the prisoners, over time, led to an increased resistance to the guard’s regime (Haslam & Reicher, 2006). After a prison breakout on Day 6, a group of former prisoners and guards conspired to create a new prisoner-guard regime in which they would be the “new guards”. Going back to the description of the original study that took place in Stanford, one can recall that dissimilarity in results exists. The SPE is remembered for showing that, simply as a consequence of assigning college students the role of guard or prisoner, the former became increasingly brutal while the latter became passive and began to show signs of psychological disturbance (Haslam & Reicher, 2006). Zimbardo and colleagues explained their findings by commenting that guard aggression ‘was emitted simply as a ‘natural’ consequence of being in the uniform of a ‘guard’ and asserting the power inherent in that role’ (Haney *et al.*, 1973, as cited in Haslam & Reicher, 2006). Thus, immersion in a group is seen to undermine the constraints that normally operate upon people when they act as individuals. In addition, when those groups have power at their disposal, this is believed to encourage extreme antisocial behaviour (Zimbardo, 1969, as cited in Haslam & Reicher, 2006). Why does there seem to be such a stark difference in the Stanford and BBC prison studies? One reason, as quoted by Haslam & Reicher, is the limited data available from the SPE which casts doubt on the analytic conclusions that have been drawn from it. Another important reason cited by Haslam & Reicher and previous commentators (Baron, 1984) is the leadership provided by the experimenters in the SPE who gave clear instructions to the participants on how to behave. Despite these instructions, video evidence of the SPE shows that many of the participants behaved out of role for much of the time (Baron, 1984, as cited in Haslam & Reicher, 2006). Both prisoners and guards challenged their roles not only at the start, but throughout the entire study. Clearly, the participants in the SPE resisted. Why, then, did Zimbardo ignore this resistance? In locating resistance in the BBC study, Haslam & Reicher advocate the social identity approach, thus leading to varied implications. Contesting the premise that group behaviour is necessarily uncontrolled, mindless and antisocial (Oakes *et al.*, 1994, as cited in Reicher & Haslam, 2006; Reicher, 2001; Turner, 1999), the results of the BBC prison study suggest that the way in which members of strong groups behave depends upon the norms and values associated with their specific social identity and may be either anti- or pro-social (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997).

It is with the aid of Tajfel's social identity model that Reicher *et al.* (2011) have developed a model to explain collective resistance which is shown on the next page (figure 3.1). In this model, Haslam & Reicher (2011) with the help of the social identity approach conceptualize collective resistance as a phenomenon wherein individuals' level of shared social identification, when it is high but the group boundaries are impermeable and security of the group relation low, the individual as part of a group may indulge in the strategy of social competition, thereby showing hostility, conflict and antagonism to directly challenge the out-group's superiority.

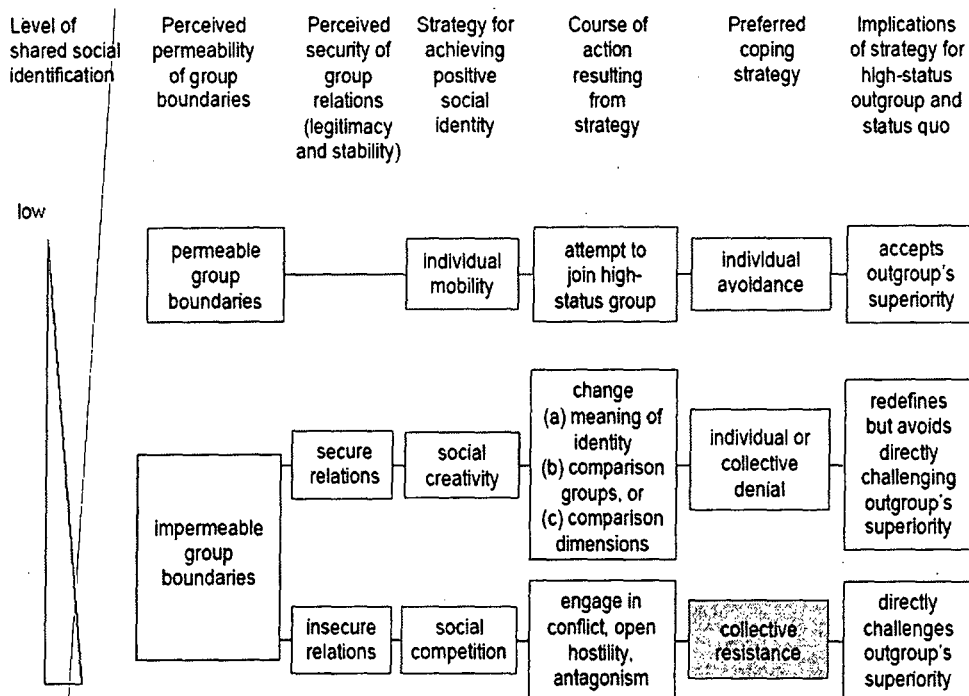


Figure 3.1 Relationship between perceived social structure, strategies for self enhancement and preferred coping strategies for members of low-status groups, as predicted by S (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the Integrated Social Identity Model of Stress (ISIS; Haslam & Reicher, 2006, p.1039). Source: Haslam & Reicher, 2011.

The BBC study, however, has not been completely free of controversies. To one of the criticisms about external validity that Zimbardo had of Reicher & Haslam's study, wherein he claims that prisoner domination of the guards is not observed

“anywhere in the known universe” (Zimbardo, 2006); Reicher & Haslam counter that the purpose of their study was to show the theoretical possibility of resistance, pointing to the fact that this is a feature of most social systems in which tyranny prevails (e.g. Foucault, 1978). Reicher (2011) argues, there are two sides of group psychology – groups can dominate, denigrate, dehumanize and even destroy others. On the other hand, they can also challenge and destroy systems of inequality between groups. While the earlier papers on the BBC study lacked an explicit definition of the term “resistance”, implicit meaning of the term from the earlier papers (2004, 2006), however, could be understood as “acting of the subordinate groups against the hegemonic practices of the dominant groups.” In their 2011 paper, Haslam & Reicher defined resistance as *the process and action of challenging one's subordinated position in a given social system*. Overall, therefore, it can be said that the BBC study's explanation lies closer to what has been the conceptualization in other disciplines of social sciences, as discussed previously.

Resistance, in fact, is not a new talk of the town. It was present in the very study that was labelled a conformity study despite all traces of resistance and independence in it. A reading of Asch's original paper indicates his clear intention of investigating conditions of independence and lack of independence in the face of group oppositions, thus, depicting both aspects of social influence. In fact, the original paper (Asch, 1956) is the only one where the term resistance has been used when Asch states that his aim was to observe the impact of these conditions when the question at issue was that of resisting or bowing to a prevailing group direction (Asch, 1956). In reality, Asch condemned the use of conformity as an explanation for group processes. He states:

In the early stages of investigation the solution to these questions appeared obvious. The far-reaching compliance of persons with group demands was referred to a psychological tendency to "uncritical acceptance" of group ideas and evaluations. General observation and controlled studies seemed to support the conclusion that the fundamental social-psychological process was that of conformity. But the notion of conformity is essentially a restatement, in the guise of an explanation, of the observable events and adds little to our understanding of them. (Asch, 1956, p. 2).

Moreover, Asch also points at the flaw in interpretations that give an upper hand to the group. He questions, “[G]ranting the great power of groups, may we simply conclude that they can induce persons to shift their decisions and convictions in almost any desired direction, that they can prompt us to call true what we yesterday deemed false, that they can make us invest the identical action with the aura of rightness or with the stigma of grotesqueness and malice? (Asch, 1956, p. 2). He points at the range of social influence processes particularly to argue that it is not justifiable to assume in advance that a theory of social influence should be a theory of submission to social pressure. And as mentioned in the previous chapter, the striving for independence and resistance to encroachment, he feels, are as much facts about people as is conformity. All this is clear evidence of the unbiased approach that Asch had towards social influence processes. Despite this, researchers following Asch distorted the picture to quite some extent and presented only the conformity aspect of social influence. The social psychology textbooks, in this context, are one of the main transgressors; Friend *et al* (1990) analysed 99 textbooks and found that only around 1% of the textbook actually mention the frequencies that Asch mentioned in his work to give a complete picture of the independence-conformity situation. The brimming question here is to understand why such a distortion has taken place and why researchers in the area of social psychology ignored the independence situation in the Asch experiments despite the clear reiterations by Asch. The more concerning fact is that these distortions have only become more twisted as the years have passed by. So with all these distortions, Asch studies have, unfortunately, only come to be known as conformity studies, and are therefore considered a special case because this has happened despite Asch’s intentions otherwise.

Over time there have been theorists who have worked towards proving that the individual is more than just a conforming being. At the forefront of this endeavour has been the work of Moscovici (1969) who devised the term ‘minority influence’ that may be the opposite of conformity bias. Moscovici, Luge and Naffrechoux (1969) demonstrated this phenomenon by reversing Asch’s experimental design. They pitted the minority of one against a majority; but in this case it was the minority who was the confederate of the experimenter and gave the wrong answer while the majority was asked to give their responses after the minority. It was observed that when the behaviour of the minority was consistent the number of replies that matched that of the confederate minority was higher in the experimental group than in the control group, thus, showing

that the minority can also influence the majority. However, the catch was that the behaviour style of the minority had to be consistent. Moscovici *et al.* noted that when the minority's behaviour was not consistent (in other words, repetitive), its impact on the majority was minimal. This was later challenged by Nemeth *et al.* (1974) who proposed that for a minority to have an influence it is not necessary that their behaviour be repetitive but rather a consistent pattern is what might be more effective, and this pattern may not necessarily be that of repetition. Largely, therefore, the case of the Asch studies is clear. As can be read from the various accounts mentioned in Chapter two, Asch meant to study independence and resistance in his studies. Moreover, his studies demonstrate this existence through the number of individuals who actively give correct responses despite the pressures of the majority. Also, work of Moscovici & Nemeth supports the claim that it is possible for resistance to be studied in psychology.

The third and final account is that of the study of obedience by Milgram. In Milgram's experiment a simple process was developed for studying obedience. Individuals were called into the laboratory and, on the pretext of a learning experiment, were told to give increasingly severe shocks to another person (who was actually a confederate). The purpose of the experiment was to see the extent to which a subject will proceed before refusing to comply with the experimenter's instructions. The results showed that twenty-six of 40 subjects administered the highest shocks on the generator. These results shocked the world by claiming that decent people can be transformed into tyrants as a result of their "natural" conformity to the roles and rules handed down by authorities. For almost four decades there has been a debate over this banality of evil hypothesis. In recent times, two theorists (Reicher & Haslam, 2012) have outright refuted what in 1963 Arendt (as cited in Rochat & Modigliani, 1995) termed the banality of evil thesis, which was also endorsed by Milgram. Their work, published in *Contesting the "Nature" Of Conformity: What Milgram and Zimbardo's Studies Really Show*, challenge these earlier findings by the help of empirical work informed by social identity theorizing. Haslam & Reicher (2012) allude that:

Although it remains highly influential, Milgram's thesis loses credibility under close empirical scrutiny. "On the one hand, it ignores copious evidence of resistance even in studies held up as demonstrating that conformity is inevitable. On the other hand, it ignores the evidence that those who do heed authority in doing evil do so knowingly not blindly, actively not passively, creatively not

automatically. They do so out of belief not by nature, out of choice not by necessity. In short, they should be seen and judged as engaged followers, not as blind conformists.” (Haslam & Reicher, 2012, p. 3).

Even before the contestation by Haslam & Reicher, Milgram’s work was repudiated by Rochat & Modigliani (1995) who in their essay question the use of the banality of evil thesis by saying that such a view of human capacities does nothing to explain the actions of equally ordinary people who defied authorities to rescue potential victims during the Holocaust. Their work gives a contrasting but non-contradictory conception of the ordinariness of goodness and illustrates it by examining closely how the people of the French village of Le Chambon managed, during World War II to resist the efforts of Vichy authorities to induce them to participate in the persecution of minority people, thereby enabling them to save thousands of refugees. From the accounts of rescuers’ actions during the Nazi era in Europe, Rochat *et al.* (1995) observe that:

Those who refused to obey the orders of authorities, and came to the aid of persecuted people, were neither saints nor heroes. Rather, their goodness was that of ordinary men and women who were responsive to the victims’ manifest need for help (Rochat *et al.*, 1995, p. 197).

Such accounts make it clear that banalization of evil, as demonstrated by Milgram, is not an inevitable outcome of processes unleashed when powerful authorities give harmful orders to subordinates; goodness does not disappear but always remains. This is true of Milgram’s experiments as well. As is popularly believed, not all of his subjects complied with the experimenter’s orders. In fact, more than one-third of all subjects refused to continue hurting the victim – a body of data that, like Asch’s data, has largely been overlooked.

In an interesting analysis, Rochat *et al.* (1995) compare the French villagers of a small community that countered the orders of powerful authorities in a wartime context with that of Milgram’s disobedient participants. While Milgram’s situation is clear to us, a background of the La Chambon setting is essential here. During the Nazi period in Europe, from the mid-1930s to 1944, persecuted people who were fleeing Franco’s fascist regime in Spain, and later the Nazis—first in Germany and Austria and

later on in Central and East Europe—found sanctuary in the French village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and its surrounding area known as the Plateau Vivarais-Lignon. These refugees were well received in Le Chambon. They lived among the local villagers and peasants who took them in and protected them during police searches (Rochat *et al.*, 1995, p. 198). According to Rochat *et al.* the two situations are similar at a level that both the Chambonnais and the subjects in Milgram's studies were caught between the pleas of helpless victims and the orders of malevolent authorities. They question whether the ordinary quality of resistance that is found among the villagers of Le Chambon is also visible among Milgram's subjects? Rochat *et al.* note three factors that facilitated effective resistance in Le Chambon, which were a) Immediacy of Resistance—the timing chosen by the spiritual leaders of Le Chambon to begin opposing the Vichy government, b) Maintaining the Initiative—remaining a step ahead of the authorities and, c) Delay in Retaliation—the length of time that passed before the Vichy police finally searched the village and sought to punish the rebellious rescuers. In a parallel analysis, Rochat *et al.* believe that it is these three factors that also work in the Milgram set up. For example, with reference to the role of immediacy of resistance, Modigliani & Rochat (1995) show that that subjects who began questioning or objecting to the experimenter's requests early in the procedure were substantially more likely to end up becoming defiant. They speculate that the role of *length of waiting period* with respect to Milgram's work could also be an essential feature of the experimental design. Since, Milgram did not allow his subjects any meaningful waiting time, it is only fair to question the consequences had he given the subjects a few minutes to gather their thoughts—say, one third of the way through the procedure (after 150 volts) or even halfway through (after 225 volts)—many more of them would have been able to formulate a line of argument that could have permitted them to break off the experiment (Rochat *et al.*, 1995). With respect to the role of maintaining the initiative, Rochat & Modigliani report how “many subjects were able to seize the initiative, and catch the experimenter off guard, by rather quickly posing questions and/or objections that the experimenter was not able to respond to effectively using the rather limited set of prods at his disposal. The authority's seeming evasiveness and unresponsiveness appeared to contribute notably to subjects' ability to persist and eventually become fully defiant.” (p. 206). To sum, it becomes clear from Modigliani & Rochat's review that resistance was as much a part of Milgram's study as was obedience. Indeed, as they put it:

... if their (disobedient subjects) resistant behaviour was, indeed, as non-confrontational and as rooted in common-sense ethical rules as it appears to be from the material we have been able to review, there is a real possibility that developing a dialectic between the banality of evil and the ordinariness of goodness can lead to a richer understanding of authority-subordinate relations” (Rochat *et al.*, 1995, p. 209).

The above three classic studies and their counters in the area of social psychology demonstrate that individuals and groups are capable of resistance and have in fact displayed the same in various situations. The field of social psychology seems to be finally catching up with other social science disciplines like sociology, anthropology and political studies. Recent literature in social psychology (Reicher, Haslam *et al.*, 2006, 2011, 2012) has given attention to the fact that another side to tyranny exists; all that is required is for theorists in the discipline to recognise and acknowledge its presence for its better conceptualization. As stated earlier in this chapter, Haslam & Reicher (2011) have formally defined resistance as “*the process and action of challenging one’s subordinated position in a given social system*” (p. 153). Though this definition, no doubt, holds true; it seems a little oversimplified for there are various dimensions to the act of resistance. The subordinate is not necessarily the only one who resists, the super-ordinate or dominant classes could well be a part of the resistance movements. With respect to this, the following matrix (table 3.2) is developed, which gives an idea of four possible situations that could occur in a social influence model. On the x-axis is the dimension - motive of resistance, which is further differentiated into the motive of maintaining status and challenging quo. On the y-axis is the aspect of group identity, which is divided into negatively and positively stereotyped group identities.

The top left box in the figure represents internalizers, who belong to a negatively stereotyped but are motivated to keep the state of affairs unchanged. These are individuals who internalize their submissive stance and have come to be habituated to it. The explanations for this could this be varied. Second, come the conservatives, who belong to the positively stereotyped groups and like the previous type also aim to maintain the status quo. One simple reason for this is that they do not feel the need to challenge the existing state of affairs; they may not aim to move out of their comfort zones. A third type is the individuals who despite belonging to a positively stereotyped

group may initiate challenging how things stand. Even though uncommon, such cases do exist. The last and most relevant type for this work is the one that belongs to a negatively stereotyped group and is actively involved in challenging the status quo, in pursuit of better opportunities for themselves and others who belong to this group.

The figure below may have may have certain terminologies similar to Fulgini's (2007) conceptualization that differentiates between resistance, transcendence, internalization and dis-identification (resistance and internalization being common). However, the difference lies in the idea behind its derivation. The above model is a simple matrix based on the group identity and motive behind resistance. However, Fulgini derives the four terms on the basis of a complex explanation of marginality, individual factors, folk sociology and cultural narratives. Moreover, in the figure above, all four of the types are meant to be some form of resistance – whether to maintain or challenge the status quo. The most relevant for this work, however, are resistance and radical/progressive types.

		Motive of Resistance	
		Maintain Status quo	Challenge Status quo
Group Identity	Negatively Stereotyped	a) INTERNALIZE	b) RESISTANCE
	Positively Stereotyped	c) CONSERVATIVE/ TRADITIONAL	d) RADICAL/ PROGRESSIVE/ ACTIVISTS

Table 3.2: Types of Resistance based on the Group Identity and the motive of challenging or maintaining the status quo.

Like many other widely used terms, resistance has been used in such a variety of ways that it often becomes unclear of whether two authors are discussing the same issue. This proves that there definitely is scope for further discussion on what resistance

entails, this review gives a broad outline of the themes included in resistance and the gaps in social psychological literature. What might appear odd is that throughout the chapter there has not been an attempt to explicitly define resistance. This is mainly for the reason that it may lead to the suggestion that resistance is a phenomenon that can be easily defined; the literature certainly points otherwise. However, a typology (e.g. 3.2) only helps articulate the line of argument thereby helping a conceptual development of the term 'resistance' for social psychology.

Summary

The aim of this chapter has been to shift the emphasis from critiquing existing mainstream practices to that of introducing a new research orientation, which in this context has been the inclusion of a resistance paradigm in social psychological research. This, however, may not be an easy task for a discipline so enmeshed in an individualistic-positivistic paradigm. For this reason, this chapter presented a review of resistance literature from various social science disciplines with the sole idea that a conceptual clarification of the term 'resistance' will be beneficial for social psychology. For example, review of the circumstances under which resistance occurs and the motive behind the resistance can contribute to broaden the scope of social psychology to include issues such as power, inequality, and social change in it.

Chapter 4

The Case of Stereotype Threat: What about the group's scope to resist?

"...But then, the people became terribly afraid and anxious. For lo! The Cognitive Miser had become transformed, by the magic of further research, into the Cognitive Monster. No longer did the creature use simplifying categories and stereotypes by choice or strategy, their use had become an addiction—uncontrollable, not a matter of choice at all—and the creature's Will was powerless to do anything else. 'We must do something!' cried the people of Social Psychology. 'We must slay the monster!'

And so their heroes came forth."

- Bargh (1999)

This chapter builds on the ideas laid down in the previous chapters by linking them to certain shortcomings in the literature on stereotype threat. Stereotype threat theory has been taken as a case in point because the idea for this dissertation commenced with a review of literature on it, which revealed how theorists have mostly ignored the fact that individuals belonging to negatively stereotyped groups (whatever the context may be) might be capable of overcoming and resisting the effects of this negative stereotyping, and not simply succumbing to it. Having introduced a resistance framework in the previous chapter, it is the aim of this one to apply these understandings to an area that has been of perennial interest to many social psychologists in the past two decades. This chapter will give, firstly, a broad overview of the research on stereotype threat which includes three main areas such as processes in stereotype threat, effect of stereotype threat on the individual and the ways to reduce the effect of stereotype threat. Secondly, a critique of stereotype threat will be presented with its basis on the explanation of the term 'stereotype'. The role of the perspective one chooses to view the term will be highlighted by showing a transition from the social cognition to the social identity perspective. Lastly, a section will be devoted to the implications of using an alternative viewpoint of the term stereotype, of which the primary may be the inclusion of a resistance framework to the study of stereotype threat. Finally, a comparison of stereotype threat framework with the scenario of education research in the discipline of sociology will be included.

4.1 Stereotype Threat: An overview

The power of stereotypes, scientists have long figured, lay in their ability to change the behaviour of the person holding the stereotype (Begley, 2000). Stereotype threat is one of the consequences of stereotyping on the stereotyped individual that has seen to change the behaviour of the targeted individual. The pioneering work of Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson (1995) on stereotype threat was first published in their seminal paper '*Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans*' (1995). In the limelight for the past two decades, stereotype threat has been explained as "being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's group" (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p.797). The classic work on stereotype threat demonstrated how a stereotype that pervades a group makes people aware of how society views them, such that the mere knowledge of the stereotype can affect how well they do on intellectual and other tasks. According to Kit, Tuako & Mateer (2008), it is a situational phenomenon leading to test performance decrements, in which a member of a stigmatized group feels pressured by the possibility of confirming or being judged by a negative stereotype. For instance, a male may find himself having difficulty with a test and may begin to worry about failing it. For a female, however, the worry may not just limit to failing the test but also, reinforcing the math-inferiority stereotype. Therefore, struggling with a math test becomes doubly threatening, as one begins to worry not only about failing the test, but also about being personally reduced to a negative stereotype targeting one's group in that domain (Singletary, Ruggs, Hebl, & Davies, 2009). Thus, the role of the self and the possibility of one's group being judged in stereotypic terms becomes a central concern, making the context a salient factor and thereby implying a socio-psychological standpoint to the issue of the gap in intellectual/academic achievement.

In terms of the research on the effect that stereotype threat can have on individuals, there has been a great deal of work demonstrating the negative consequences of being in a situation where one is likely to encounter stereotype threat. According to Block *et al.*, (2011), there are more than 300 published studies in peer-reviewed journals on stereotype threat. Stereotype threat has been found to occur when the following conditions are met: (a) the task an individual is performing is relevant to the stereotype about an individual's group, (b) the task is challenging, (c) the individual is performing in a domain with which he or she identifies, and (d) the context in which the task is being performed is likely to reinforce the stereotype (Block *et al.*, 2011).

Theorists such as Schmader & Johns (2003) and Steele (1997) suggest psychological and physiological mechanisms such as anxiety, arousal (i.e., readiness to respond to specified stimuli), and working memory as possible mediating variables for the negative effects of stereotype threat on performance. Other factors like the extent to of identification with their group or a particular domain (e.g., math) also seem to impact that stereotype threat has on the performance of the individuals. Stereotype threat not only creates performance decrements but ultimately may also impact major life decisions (i.e., choice of profession) and prevent individuals from reaching their full potential within a threatened domain (Gupta & Bhawe, 2007, as cited in Singletary *et al.*, 2009). As a result of such short and long-term negative effects, researchers have begun to look at ways to remediate stereotype threat.

Another aspect of researches taking place in this area involves the question of who are affected by the stereotype threat situation. Stereotype threat has been studied to show how it negatively affects the performance of various groups (e.g., ethnic minorities, women, elderly and people with low socioeconomic status). The majority of research on stereotype threat has been done on African Americans and women (Spencer *et al.*, 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Studies have shown that African Americans suffer from stereotype threat in situations where cognitive ability is being tested (Spencer, Quinn, & Steele, 2001; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Many studies concerning the impact of stereotype threat on women examine this phenomenon within the math domain (Brown & Pinel, 2003; Schmader, 2002; Spencer *et al.*, 1999).

Yet another aspect deals with understanding the mechanisms that underlie the stereotype threat-performance link. What comes across as the most salient factor in the impact that stereotype threat may have on performance is stereotype activation, as has been shown by Steele & Aronson (1995). Stereotype activation involves making the membership to a particular negatively stereotyped group salient. For e.g. by simply telling women participants that the test they are going to take measures their mathematical ability (the notion is that women are inferior in math ability) is enough to activate the gender stereotype. Stereotype threat studies demonstrate that simply mentioning that the task involves gender differences and that it involves these particular domains is enough to activate gender stereotypes and therefore induce stereotype threat. Anxiety has been postulated as one of the many factors that may be responsible for performance depletion on stereotype-related tasks. For example, Spencer, Steele, and Quinn (1999) found that when the test was primed as gender fair rather than gender

biased, women reported less anxiety. They also reported a relationship between anxiety and test performance; however, evidence of anxiety being a mediator in stereotype threat – performance relation was found questionable. As stated earlier, individual differences such as domain or group identification (Brown & Pinel, 2003; Schmader, 2002; Steele, 1997) have also been found impacting performance in the stereotype threat task. Early on, Steele (1997) suggested that stereotype threat affects individuals who identify with the relevant domain (e.g., women who identify with math) more than it impacts individuals who do not identify with that domain. Steele suggested that those who do not identify with the domain will likely underperform whether or not stereotype threat is present; therefore, it is the individuals who do identify with the domain who are most at risk for allowing stereotype threat to undermine their performance. Further research suggests that domain identification is not the only type of identification that plays a role in how stereotype threat influences individuals (Singletary *et al.*, 2009). Schmader (2002) found that identification with one's group (based on gender identity) moderates the effects of stereotype threat on women's performance. Consequently, those women who identify more with their own group will performance far worse than those who do not. Another variable that influences the stereotype threat - performance relationship is stigma consciousness (Brown & Pinel, 2003). Stigma consciousness refers to the self-awareness that an individual has concerning his or her stigmatized status based on a group membership (Singletary *et al.*, 2009). Brown and Pinel (2003) found that women high in stigma consciousness were more negatively impacted by stereotype threat than were women low in stigma consciousness.

Additionally, Schmader *et al.* (2008) propose that a combination of physiological, affective, and cognitive processes may be responsible to impact the performance in a stereotyped task. The main postulate of this theory is that physiological stress response, which is a result of the stereotype threat situation, depletes the working memory; since individuals become busy in monitoring their behaviour consciously, their efficiency on the task goes down; and along with the above two, self-regulation tactics such as suppressing negative thoughts and emotions also become a prime focus of the individual. This suggests that individuals devote their efficiency in focusing on the risks associated with the stereotype threat and ways to fight the threat, which hardly leaves them with any resources to perform well in the task at hand. Even though characterized as a situational threat, the discussion above gives an inclination of how individual level

processes, limited at the level of the cognition take precedence in stereotype threat theory.

Considering the pervasive negative impact that stereotype threat can have on individuals on various domains, research has shifted towards recognizing ways to reduce this negative effect. Some of these methods include reframing the task (e.g. Alter, 2010), deemphasizing threatened social identities (e.g. Stricker and Ward, 2004), providing role models (e.g. Blanton, Crocker, & Miller, 2000), having the test administered by a member of the stigmatized group, providing external attributions for difficulty (e.g. Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht, 2003), and assuring individuals that they are capable (e.g. Martens, Johns, Greenberg, and Schimel, 2006). Some theorists have suggested changing the description of the test as a way to reduce the effect of stereotype threat. For example, women appearing for a math test might be told that the test is gender fair (Quinn & Spencer, 2001; Spencer *et al.*, 1999). This practise may help because it leads to the elimination of fear or pressure of confirming the stereotype of women's inferiority in mathematics domains. A second method for reducing stereotype threat consists of deemphasizing threatened social identities. Previous research has found that simply removing or changing the location of demographic questions can reduce the occurrence of stereotype threat (Singletary *et al.*, 2009). For instance, having individuals indicate their gender after the test is finished, rather than at the beginning, has been shown to increase performance on the test (Stricker & Ward, 2004). This is useful because since identity is indicated at the end of the test, group memberships are not primed. Another method for reducing stereotype threat includes providing examples of role models in the respective domains. For instance, when female students are exposed to women that have performed successfully in mathematics and science related fields, they perform better than female students who do not have examples of women with such performance (Blanton, Crocker, & Miller, 2000). Also, reading essays about such role models has been seen to reduce the negative effects of stereotype threat. Thus, direct and indirect exposure can both be enough to reduce the negative impacts of stereotype threat for female students. Keeping the aspect of power in mind, research has confirmed that having the test administered by a member of the stigmatized group can reduce stereotype threat. For example, women will experience less stereotype threat on a math test if the test is administered by a female teacher (Marx & Goff, 2005). Self-affirmation has been posited as another method for remediating the negative impacts of stereotype threat. Self-affirmation involves priming aspects of the self that are not

related to the threatened domain (McGlone & Aronson, 2006). Research has shown that having students self-affirm has longitudinal effects and results in improved performance at the end of a semester. What is of interest here is that for a phenomenon which, at its roots is clearly related to the group the individual identifies with, such explanations fall short of remediation at the group level.

Taking the theoretical framework of the stereotype threat model a step ahead is a recent work of Shapiro & Neuberg (2007) who developed a Multi-threat framework for causes, moderators, mediators, consequences, and interventions of stereotype threat. The need for this framework mainly emerges from the fact that “stereotype threat seems to mean different things to different researchers and has been employed to describe and explain processes and phenomena that appear to be fundamentally distinct” (p.107). As would be clear from Table 4.1, Shapiro & Neuberg posit the existence of six qualitatively distinct stereotype threats. The two dimensions taken are - the target of the threat (the self or one’s group) and the source of the threat (the self, out-group others, or in-group others). The intersection of these dimensions results in stereotype based threats to a) one’s personal self-concept, b) to one’s group-concept, c) to one’s personal reputation in eyes of out-group members, d) to one’s group’s reputation in the eyes of out-group members, e) to one’s personal reputation in the eyes of in-group members, and f) to one’s group’s reputation in the eyes of in-group members (p. 112).

Table 4.1: Six Qualitatively Distinct Stereotype Threats Emerge From the Intersection of Two Dimensions: Source of the Threat and Target of the Threat

		<i>Target of the Threat</i>	
		<i>Self</i>	<i>Group</i>
<i>Source of the Threat</i>			
Self	Self-Concept Threat Fear that my behavior will confirm, in my own mind, that the negative stereotypes held of my group are true of me	Group-Concept Threat Fear that my behavior will confirm, in my own mind, that the negative stereotypes held of my group are true of my group	
Outgroup Members	Own-Reputation Threat (Outgroup) Fear that my behavior will confirm, in the minds of outgroup members, that the negative stereotypes held of my group are true of me, and I will therefore be judged or treated badly by outgroup members	Group-Reputation Threat (Outgroup) Fear that my behavior will confirm, in the minds of outgroup members, that the negative stereotypes held of my group are true of my group and my group will therefore be judged or treated badly by outgroup members	
Ingroup Members	Own-Reputation Threat (Ingroup) Fear that my behavior will confirm, in the minds of ingroup members, that the negative stereotypes held of my group are true of me and I will therefore be judged or treated badly by ingroup members	Group-Reputation Threat (Ingroup) Fear that my behavior will confirm, in the minds of ingroup members, that the negative stereotypes held of my group are true of my group and my group will therefore be judged or treated badly by ingroup members	

Source: Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007, p. 113

Such a framework clarifies the point that the stereotype threat situation is not homogenous. In fact, depending on source and the target, the nature of the threat that emerges may be very different from one another. It clarifies that there certainly is more than one type of threat; this implies that the responses to these threats may also vary and not necessarily be that of succumbing or conforming to the norms. By including the dimensions of the self as well as the group, this framework also allows for a scope to study negotiations that might occur at the group level. What would be an interesting, however, is to explore the threat situations out of the six where the scope of resistance is maximum, and particularly collective resistance.

Overall, however, the stereotype threat literature has clearly demonstrated the negative impact that stereotype threat can have on task performance. However, our understanding of the range of potential responses to stereotype threat is limited (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Steele and colleagues (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002) have proposed that the mere awareness of these negative stereotypes in stereotype-relevant situations is sufficient to undermine the academic performance of individuals to whom the stereotype applies. However, this theorizing of stereotype threat comes without any discussion on the background of the term stereotype itself. In what sense has the term stereotype taken by authors of stereotype threat? This question definitely needs more clarity. However, from a review of literature one can say that it seems to follow largely on the steps of the social cognition approach, where a stereotype is seen as a psychological, cognitive phenomenon rather than an interactional one. The task in the next section, therefore, will be to expound on the term stereotype - from what it was meant to be to what it has become; and also the implication of using its one meaning over the other for stereotype threat.

4.2 Conceptualizing Stereotype: From social cognition to social identity perspective

Guided by the dominant framework of social psychology, the work on stereotype threat seems to have taken only the dominant, one-dimensional meaning of stereotype. However, to have an adequate conceptualization of the stereotype threat theory one of the main prerequisites is a review of the concept of stereotypes to include what the term really means - something that has been missing in the original stereotype threat researches.

Over the past three decades the term 'stereotype' has evolved to have a particular connotation – which unfortunately is mostly negative. The titles of two chapters from the book *Understanding Prejudice and Discrimination* (Plous, 2003) - *Homo Stereotypus: Wired for Trouble* and *The Stereotype Trap* – give an indication of this fact. Stereotypes have been thought to be false or misleading generalizations about groups held in a manner that renders them largely, though not entirely, immune to counterevidence (Blum, 2004), even though the original meaning of stereotypes tells a different story. The term "stereotype," coined in 1798 by the French printer Didot, originally referred to a printing process used to create reproductions (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981, as cited in Spencer, Steele & Quinn, 1999). However, the term was first used in the true psychological sense by Journalist Walter Lippmann (1922) who likened stereotypes to "pictures in the head," or mental reproductions of reality, and from there, the term gradually came to mean generalizations about the members of a group. In his 1922 paper, Lippmann (as cited in Blum, 2004) presented "stereotypes" as axiomatic elements of human perception. In the modern world, he argued, their utility was essential. The present scenario, however, indicates that the research on stereotype took a sharp turn from the "axiomatic" element of human perception that Lippmann (1922) proposed to a "pathological" element having a "generally negative valence"; and texts in social psychology pertaining to stereotypes seem to be reiterating this fact, one of the most recent example being that of stereotype threat.

The origins of stereotype research date back to a study by Katz & Braly (1933) in which one hundred university students were asked to indicate the traits most characteristic of ten different social groups. Students displayed a high level of agreement about the traits of certain racial and ethnic groups, such as Negroes (described as superstitious by 84% of the students, and as lazy by 75%), and Jews (described as shrewd by 79%). Katz & Braly (1933) argued in this classic study that ethnic stereotypes were uniformly negative (as cited in Blum, 2004). This negative view might have been rekindled in the last forty years by the rise of social cognition approach in psychology. Early social cognition researches tended to focus on the limitations of human cognition and what is defective, flawed or irrational in the way people think. This typically came from the 'cognitive miser' approach which states that individuals have a limited capacity to process information, resulting in stereotypes. Researchers suggest that what seems most wrong about human thinking is encapsulated in the stereotype, to the point that some authors have argued that stereotypes are even held to

be wrong (and are therefore unwanted) by the people who hold them (Bodenhausen & Macrae, 1998, as cited in McGarty, Spears & Yzerbyt, 2002). Hilton & Von Hippel (1996) in the first review article on stereotypes write: “It is evident from this review that we know much more about where stereotypes come from than about how to *make them go away*” (p. 262), thus implicitly implying the negative undertone they subscribe to stereotypes; for why else would anyone wish to “make them go away”. Hilton and Von Hippel also mention that though a variety of stereotypes are based on real group differences (e.g. cultural stereotypes about food preferences), they believe that stereotypes based on relatively enduring characteristics of the person (such as race, religion, and gender) have enormous potential for error. Some others also believe that stereotypes are not only harmful in their own right; they do damage by fostering prejudice and discrimination (e.g. Plous, 2003).

Nevertheless, over the years new conceptions of stereotypes have developed. Emphasis shifted from stereotypes as a product of faulty, rigid and irrational thinking to an expression of basic human cognitive functioning, based on the process of categorization (e.g. Tajfel, 1969). The idea was planted by Bruner (1957) who asserted that categorization – individual or social – is the basic process of cognitive functioning or perception. He also argued that without categorization there could be no perception (Bruner, 1957), and it is this process of categorization that is a main basis of stereotype. This is how basic the idea of categorization and stereotyping was to be; it was not to be understood only in the negative way, and certainly not in the way it has come to be construed by researchers. This line of argument was further developed and continued by Tajfel (1981), Turner (1999), and McGarty *et al* (2002) of the social identity approach, among others.

As Condor (1990) points out, it was Tajfel who emphasized the importance of motivational considerations to perception of *social* categories. He rejected the perspectives which considered stereotyping simply in terms of its function for the individual perceiving object. Tajfel argued for that the attention should move towards ‘social stereotypes’, which “cannot be understood without a consideration of the functions they serve in the competitive and power relationships between groups concerned” (Tajfel & Forgas, 1981, p. 133). By bringing in the aspect of competitive and power relations in stereotypes, Tajfel sure took the concept a step forward towards a ‘social’ social psychology that so many authors have pointed at. However, this did not come without any issues of its own. Like any other subjective term, ‘social’ can

also be interpreted in various ways. Susan Condor (1990) points at just that by distinguishing five ways in which the prefix social might modify, limit or inform analysis of stereotypes. Condor (1990) explicates the way in which the term 'social' may be used in five potentially contradictory view of cognition. The first is to specify a concern for the naturally human. The second is somewhat synonymous with cultural, to signal a view of stereotypes as human inventions rather than the outcome of natural human cognitive processes. For example, Turner (1987, p. 206) refers to 'socially mediated cognition, phenomenologically experienced as the perception of shared, public, objective world' thereby accepting a social constructionist position. Another level at which the term social has been discussed by Condor in the context of stereotypes is as shared beliefs. For Tajfel a crucial feature from the social identity perspective is that stereotypes are shared. The problems with this approach, however, is related to the extent and manner in which particular images are diffused within a population and stereotypes shared. A fourth aspect of the social for Condor is the conceptualization of stereotypes in an interactive context. This discussion points to the fact that stereotypes are definitely not unitary, consistent or easily describable. And so, any theorization of a phenomenon linked to stereotypes would demand an explicit conceptualization of the term beforehand.

Although the social cognition and social identity perspectives have been shown as antagonistic to each other in the above paragraphs, this divide seems to be slowly diminishing. Operario & Fiske (1999) in their chapter titled *Integrating Identity and Cognition* give evidence for this. They provide the historical context of both the approaches and delineate the possible causes for their rift. The integrative themes of pragmatism and cultural competence are discussed as bridges of the gap. According to Operario & Fiske (1999):

Pragmatism and cultural competence represent thematic trademarks of a truly social psychology. The pragmatist emphasis on goals complements the cultural emphasis on coordinated social living, both of which point to the defining role of social survival and its implications for people's social cognitions and social identities." (Operario & Fiske, 1999, p. 34-35).

Operario & Fiske also point at the compatibility between these two approaches at the meta-theoretical level. "...the assumption of one rests firmly on the basic principles

borrowed from the other. Both meta-theoretical perspectives consider individual-level pragmatics and their interaction with cultural-societal processes.” (Operario & Fiske, 1999, p. 44). Therefore, the emphasis is on collaborative research and methodological techniques to bring the two approaches closer and in the process learn from each other.

Coming to the mainstream social psychology, as discussed in chapter two, there has been an emphasis on the individual in psychology and any sort of group level theorizing has mostly been considered malfunctional. Relating to this, the notion of individual-level categorization as efficient/appropriate existed in mainstream social psychology, whereas it was assumed that any type of group-level categorization will bring in the element of distortion – and because stereotypes involve group-level categorizations, they were seen as being faulty, rigid and distorted. But, since an individual is inherently social and is constantly interacting with both individuals and groups, to say that either one of the two – individual or group level – categorization is more authentic is merely a matter of ideology and not of science or logic (Tajfel, 1972). In this context, Turner (1999) also argued that stereotyping does not impoverish but enrich social perception since it captures the other extreme of human life and sociality which could not have been otherwise accessed. McGarty *et al.* (2002) in their book, *Stereotypes as Explanations* focus on stereotype formation (and more generally ‘stereotyping’) as a dynamic psychological process embedded in intergroup relations. McGarty *et al.* (2002) state that:

Much previous and contemporary research has tended to focus on stereotyping as a psychological process, but to neglect the social and contextual dimensions of this process (e.g., the importance of own group membership, content, and the nature of the intergroup relations). Alternatively, where research has recognized the social dimension of stereotyping, it has often neglected the dynamic explanatory psychological processes involved (stereotypes as fixed structures, percepts, pictures in our heads, epiphenomena of intergroup relations or culture). If there is a common theme that brings many of the current contributions together, then, it is the attempt to integrate the cognitive and the social aspects of the stereotyping process by attention to both cognitive and social levels of explanation and analysis (McGarty *et al.*, 2002, p. 186).

Similarly, Haslam *et al.* (2002) also put across a critique of social cognitive views which have narrowed the focus of stereotypes to be fixed pictures in the individual mind. They reject this view and on the basis of the social identity approach argue that stereotypes are shared or collective tools that are used to understand and to shape reality. Their account reflects four principles. The first is that stereotypes are collective achievements. Secondly, despite a conventional wisdom to the contrary, stereotypes are constantly changing and are surprisingly responsive to changes in context. Thirdly, stereotypes are embedded in group relations and must be understood in the context of those relations. The fourth principle is that stereotypes are used to both maintain and challenge social orders (McGarty *et al.*, 2002, p. 190).

4.2.1 Ideological and Political basis of stereotypes

Various psychological mechanisms allow stereotypes to be formed, maintained, and applied even if there are no corresponding group differences. Apart from the psychological, certain sociological and political factors too play a role in the formation and maintenance of stereotypes. One needs to understand that creation of any stereotypes is not an innocent activity; it involves negotiation, instilling a sense of dependence in the 'subordinate' other and altering the other's sense of identity. Césaire (1955) and Fanon (1952) have both described in their works the dependency and inferiority that Blacks experience in a White world. Identity is the central concept when it comes to stereotyping, since it is the identity of an individual which is controlled, manipulated and strategically influenced, so as to dominate them. The notion of superiority of particular groups in society lay at the centre of this issue and the process starts with *defining* the other, for e.g. with the reinvention of slavery by the British in India originated the term '*coolies*' for unskilled labour. Africans, on the other hand, were referred to as '*negroes*'. The dominant group invents such terms and makes the subordinate aware of their meagreness and as lacking in certain traits required for success; and with this they proclaim their role as that of a saviour on a mission to liberate the lesser beings. As Fanon (1952) asserts, "[W]hat is called the black soul is a construction of the white folk" (p. xviii). The dominant colonial culture he argues identifies the black skin of the Negro with impurity; and the Antilleans accept this association and so come to despise themselves. On the other hand, however, the role of the one stereotyped cannot be discounted; as Césaire (1955) points out in the case of Nazism, "Europeans tolerated Nazism before it was inflicted on them, they absolved it,

shut their eyes to it, legitimized it...” (p. 14). Therefore, one of the main reasons for stereotypes to emerge could be the fact that they work to serve socio-political functions which vary according to the environment, the participants in the stereotype, the nature of the stereotyped, and the real and perceived power differentials between the groups being stereotyped and those doing the stereotyping. This also brings us back to the aspect of interactions and negotiation that are an inherent part of the social identity perspective.

Intentionally or unintentionally and whether one chooses to observe it or not, resistance becomes a part of discourses and practices. For instance, how the different perspectives in social psychology choose to define the term ‘stereotype’ may also depict their stance on an individual as a passive being or one who actively manoeuvres the situation in which he/she is present. Therefore, it is necessary to insert into social psychology a concern with problems of power, or more precisely with relationships of power. If this is not done, there is a risk of skirting around a number of phenomena the study of which is indispensable for our understanding of certain forms of social behaviour (Deschamps, 1982). This point seems all the more relevant in the case of stereotypes, where it becomes essential to study the power relationship between the target of the negative stereotype and the one who is stereotyping. In fact, Kray, Reb, Galinsky, & Thompson (2004) have displayed precisely this in a study where they examined conditions under which stereotype threat might produce *reactance*, behaviour in opposition to stereotype threat. In one of the experiments, male-female negotiation dyads were formed and given either a strong or weak gender stereotype manipulation implying male superiority in negotiating. One of the negotiation partners was provided with social power by suggesting that they could leave the negotiation and still receive a good settlement. Higher power vested with female in half the dyads and male in the other half of dyads. Results showed that high-powered negotiators were more effective than negotiators low in power, but this was true only when male gender stereotypes had been strongly instantiated. These effects occurred regardless of gender, suggesting that women did not succumb to, but in fact reacted against, stereotype threat. So, even though research that takes such factors into account has been initiated, there is a need for more work in the area.

Another advantage of including the aspect of power in studies on stereotype is that the notion of stereotyping as a natural and common process in cultures around the world, might then be negotiated. Even though stereotypes are ‘natural’ and inevitable

in a way and are constantly formed, defined, redefined and often rejected, they shouldn't be underestimated; for within the formation of stereotypes lays a gamut of politically and sociologically motivated goals. While the larger goal of the oppressor may be to foster such negative stereotypes so as to maintain status quo and remain in power; the way the oppressed or minority respond to this oppression becomes the pivotal aspect of this dyadic relationship. With the aid of the social identity perspective (rather than social cognition), which makes it possible for any scope of negotiation to enter the context stereotyping, it becomes favourable to study resistance as one of the many responses that the phenomenon of stereotype threat may garner. The implications of such a framework will be discussed in the following section.

4.3 Implications of a resistance framework for stereotype threat

As mentioned in the previous section, one of the direction that research on stereotype threat has taken is towards understanding how to reduce the effect of stereotype threat. While on the surface this might look like a step forward towards empowering those in the minority, it is redundant in the sense that it assumes that the individual will remain in that situation no matter what the context is. This kind of an approach also implies that the onus, again, falls on the individual to be responsible for his/her own conditions. Although at some level that does make sense, but for a phenomenon that clearly is as much social as it is individual, this approach may not go a long way in making the situation any better for social psychology.

A few examples of researches done in the area of reducing the effect of stereotype threat, will make the point above more clear. For example, Ambady *et al.* (2004) emphasize individuation as a protective measure against the detrimental effects of negative stereotype activation. Individuation here means extricating oneself from ties binding them to their in-group and thus to negative, in -group-related stereotypes. In this study, Caucasian female participants in either a gender-prime or no-prime condition were administered a mathematics test. Gender primed, individuated participants outperformed gender primed, non-individuated participants and performed as well as unprimed, non-individuated (i.e., control) participants. Clearly individuation has been shown to help in the stereotype threat situation in a laboratory. But how practical is individuation in real life? Can one really detach from a domain that one identifies with?

Similarly, Aronson, Fried and Good (2002) performed an experiment to test a method of helping students resist responses to stereotype threat. Specifically, students

in the experimental condition of the experiment were encouraged to see intelligence—the object of the stereotype—as a malleable rather than fixed capacity. Results showed that African American students (and, to some degree, the White students) encouraged to view intelligence as malleable reported greater enjoyment of the academic process, greater academic engagement, and obtained higher grade point averages than their counterparts in two control groups. Although the starting point here is of resistance, the actual work deals with nothing more than ‘managing’ the situation by changing a belief about some social construct (intelligence, in this case) at the level of the individual (the individual was asked to alter his/her belief). The discussion again stops at managing in the context rather than resisting to improve the reality condition.

If one looks at the literature on examining the *moderators* of stereotype threat, i.e. aspects of the stereotype threat process that affect the level of performance decrement that is experienced, three lines of researches emerge. The first focuses on moderating stereotype threat by moderating the emotional responses to the stereotype. For example, Aronson *et al.* (2002) and Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht (2003) found that targeting the negative stereotype associated with task performance could reduce stereotype threat. A second line of research emphasizes on moderating stereotype threat by changing perceptions of the situation. For example, Spencer *et al.* (1999) informed their participants that the stereotype does not apply in the current context. The third aspect focuses on the moderating role of individual differences. For example, the level of identification that the individual has with the domain concerned (Aronson *et al.*, 1999), identification with the group (Schmader, 2002) and levels of stigma-consciousness (Brown & Pinel, 2003). This, again, gives an indication of the extent to which the explanations and remediation for stereotype threat has been kept only at the level of cognition of the individual.

The above discussion points at an ideological flaw in social psychology. Since, psychology concerns itself mainly with the individual, group level remediation is hardly dealt with. This point has been mentioned earlier (in chapter 3) in the context of abnormal psychology where, since the entire onus for the maladaptive state is left to the internal mechanisms of the individual, social preventive action remains out of question and the status quo prevails. If one studies the stereotype threat literature carefully, it can be observed that more often than not explanations for this phenomenon are given as if it occurs in a vacuum. Discussions on unequal power dynamics between groups are mostly skipped, indicating an inertia to move away from or question the

status quo. The individual has been left to cater to the problem as if he/she is solely responsible for it. This shows that the discussion in psychology has somehow paused at 'resilience' and 'managing' situations that involve negative stereotypes, and has not advanced to indicate more direct and confronting methods. Another ideological flaw is that of the absence of discussions on power in social psychology. What needs to be understood is that practically all social relations and institutions must in some way be regarded as involving power. As Giddens (1982) has suggested, power—the capacity to achieve outcomes—does not operate in a single direction (as cited in Sadan, 2004). Social subordinates can 'turn their weakness back against the powerful. [. . .] Only a person who is kept totally confined and controlled does not participate in the dialectic of control' (1982, p. 39). This fact is most relevant for the stereotype threat phenomenon and also social psychology in general, that has had the tendency to explain various phenomena as if the power to dominate is only vested in the dominant groups. These studies do not acknowledge the power that the 'weak' or 'subordinate' groups can gather if their group-based perception is activated that can often lead to collective action. Another weakness that the halt at discussion only on remediation points at is related to methodology. An analysis of around 70 articles on stereotype threat reviewed for this work reveal that almost 100 per cent of them use the experimental method to study the phenomenon of stereotype threat. This depicts the pervasiveness of the positivist paradigm in the studies in (social) psychology. As can be expected, a phenomenon studied in the confines of a laboratory can hardly go beyond remediation at the individual level.

Outside the laboratory, the scenario may be quite different. Careful readings of biographies and autobiographies of individuals from negatively stereotyped groups suggest that they may show tremendous capacity to resist these negative stereotypes and move beyond what is expected of them. And, this is not limited simply at the level of the individual. Theoretical studies by Harlow (1987) have discussed the ways in which narratives and autobiographies have been used as a means of political assertion by marginalized groups (as cited in Beth, 2007). Sarah Beth in terms of Indian context states, "...for the Dalit community, like many other marginalized groups, autobiography is not simply a kind of literature but is a form of assertion and resistance in its own right" (p. 3). She believes that by writing about their own experiences as a Dalit, Omprakash Valmiki and Surajpal Chauhan reveal two objectives in their autobiographies. One is to contest the basis of caste discrimination, and the second clear

narrative agenda of these Dalit autobiographies is to expose the reality behind the institutional narrative that caste no longer functions as a significant force in the public sphere of modern India. Even Howarth (2006), in the area of stigma literature, argues that in certain conditions stigmatised people may contest and even transform stigmatising representations and practices – and that a social psychology of stigma needs to take account of human capacity for agency, and to allow for the possibility of resistance and change. It can thus be argued that an appreciable percentage of individuals resist stereotyping rather than meekly accepting or adapting to it. The fact that resistance has been ignored (for various reasons) instead of being discussed and researched, becomes a matter of grave concern.

The discussion on resistance and power go hand in hand and to talk about one without the other would be addressing the problem only partially. The problem of power is central to Foucault's thinking regarding the relations between society, individuals, groups and institutions. Foucault tries to move beyond viewing power as plain oppression of the powerless by the powerful, aiming to examine how it operates in day to day interactions between people and institutions. In this sense, the power is more like something that acts and operates in a certain way, it's more a strategy than a possession. Foucault sees it as coextensive with resistance, as a productive factor, because it has positive effects such as the individual's self-making, and because, as a condition of possibility for any relation, it is ubiquitous, being found in any type of relation between the members of society. Consistent with Foucault's assertion that "where there is power there is resistance," Moscovici (1976) shows that power and influence do not only flow in one direction but instead are distributed in complex ways throughout any social system. They are not a one-way street where only the powerless or one's in the subordinate positions are stereotyped. A classic example for this is in the case of white basketball players and the notion that "white men can't jump". Taking this view, it can be said that though a minority group may be oppressed, at another level they have a power of their own, which they may use to influence the majority's actions.

4.4 The context of education

Since stereotype theory is essentially a theory that started off with work in the academic domain, it makes sense to contrast it with work in the area of education in the discipline that stands close to social psychology, i.e. sociology. Two of the theorists in sociology that may be relevant for a work that centres on resistance are Henry Giroux and Peter

Woods. Both in certain ways go beyond the reductionist explanations of social psychology to form a framework of education and resistance for the larger society. The two disciplines can be compared in their ways of tackling certain aspects in the area of education. On the one hand, Steele and Aronson describe conditions under which individuals belonging to negatively stereotyped groups may be affected by those that belong to the dominant groups in intellectual achievement (for example) when their negative group identity is made salient; on the other, Giroux and Woods take the specific cases of radical pedagogy and interactionist perspective on schooling, respectively.

Differing from the social cognitive perspective of psychology, the work of Woods (1983) takes an interactionist framework to understand the context of the school as a site of interaction. He places emphasis on micro level social interaction to make sense of or give meaning to human behaviour and social processes. This perspective emerged with the ideas of two key thinkers – Max Weber and George Herbert Mead, who believed that "most human and humanizing activity that people engage in is talking to each other" (Griffin, 2006, as cited in Woods, 1983). Blumer (1969) set out three basic premises of the interactionist perspective: a) humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things, b) the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society, and c) these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters. Blumer proposed that people interact and try to make sense of each other by interpreting the actions they perform instead of just reacting – this is a dialectical view of the relationship between individual and society.

Two of the main areas within the interactionist theory that Woods discusses are strategies and negotiation. Unlike the social psychological theory of stereotype threat, Woods believes that in a school situation there is a constant dyadic interplay of strategies (both pupil and teacher) and negotiation. Pupils develop strategies in response to the demands made on them to handle those demands in line with their own interests (Woods, 1983, p. 124). These strategies could range from 'pleasing the teacher', 'having a laugh' to 'sussing out', 'doing nothing' and 'hanging around'. According to Woods, the standard teacher instructional strategy is 'recitation' and 'chalk the talk'. Teachers also come up with coping strategies, which they devise when they come up against the burden of constraints and contradictions (Woods, 1983). Common forms of

coping strategies include 'policing' and 'confrontation-avoidance'. Woods also believes that much of the schooling life consists of negotiations as teachers and pupils are both trying to maximize their interests in opposition to the other. Thus, a working consensus has to be established even at the school level. This gives an idea that the academic domain is also not a neutral realm, negotiations and strategies are a constant fixture that works in tandem with the other activities that may go on in a school setting.

Contrasting to Steele and Aronson's point of view and somewhat close to the work of Woods is the work of critical theorist Giroux (1983), whose cognizance of a need for resistance framework in the education set up can be understood from the following statement: "[t]he traditional radical educational theories that emphasize the reproduction of social structure through schooling (thus) need to be supplemented by an understanding of the active role of schools in the constitution of human subjects not merely as labour for capital but also as cultural agents capable of resisting domination and of creating alternative worlds" (Ryan, 1984, p. 469). He argues against both the liberal theories that place excessive emphasis on human agency and the radical theories that excessively downplay agency in favour of determining structures. According to Ryan (1984), Giroux advocates a more dialectically mediated approach that calls for a multidimensional and complex understanding of the interplay between agency and structure, between lived human experience in schools and the social power relations to which schools are linked. His goal thereby is to elaborate a new mode of analysis that would help reconstruct the theory of radical pedagogy in a way that would place more emphasis on the role of conflict and resistance in schools and that would offer program proposals that would transform education and point ultimately toward a transformation of society (p. 471). Giroux disagrees with the positivism that dominates the reigning model of knowledge which promotes technocratic efficiency and social conformity. Instead, he proposes as an alternative is dialectical thought, a theoretical practice that would stress "the historical, relational, and normative dimensions of social inquiry and knowledge". The model of the dialectic allows Giroux to speak of finding progressive alternatives at the heart of the system of domination. "Within the most authoritative modes of classroom discipline and control are fleeting images of freedom that speak to very different relationships" (Giroux, 1983. p. 71). This kind of an approach makes necessary a more interrelational model of power and resistance, agency and structure, and it implies, according to Giroux, that the overemphasis on the cognitive in educational theory must be supplemented by more attention to human needs, the

domain of the sensual, the imagination, and everyday lived experience in schooling (Ryan, 1984). Giroux argues that meaning of oppositional behaviour has little to do with the logic of deviance, individual pathology, learned helplessness (and of course, genetic explanations), and a great deal to do, though not exhaustively, with the logic of moral and political indignation. For Giroux, school culture has a dual edge - whenever there is domination, there is also the possibility of resistance.

Coming back to the main topic i.e. stereotype threat, one can say that so far, when considering the responses to the effect of stereotype threat, the individual as the responder has been apparent. But as we may recall from the description of what the process of stereotype threat contains, it is a group level phenomenon. And so, it is only fitting that the dimension of a collective response of the group be also considered when discussing stereotype threat effects. This dimension can only be incorporated once the context is viewed as dynamic including both the stereotyped and the dominant group as involved in a constant flux of strategies and negotiations. It is with this perspective that responses like strategic non-conformity (Griskevicius, 2006) and academic disengagement (Ogbu, 2003, as cited in Foley, 2004) may be considered as forms of resistance in the theory of stereotype threat.

Summary

The main idea that has been put across in this chapter is the need to move beyond the social cognition perspective towards a social identity approach in conceptualizing stereotypes. The implication of using this altered meaning of stereotype could lead to the studying of resistance as a possible outcome of the stereotype threat phenomenon. Both Giroux and Woods' works in the school setting point towards a need for a radical shift in how one views the interactions in a social setting – one of which is the academic. Incorporating resistance into classic and modified stereotype threat studies highlights the personal agency of negatively stereotyped individuals, missing especially in classic stereotype threat theory. However, all this discussion is at the theoretical level. What remains to be understood is a way to incorporate these observations into an empirical work. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Looking back, Moving forward: Of Alternate Methodologies and Paradigms

“In science, as in other pursuits, it is not enough to point to a defect or to throw a stone at the sinner. It is foreseeable that if a concomitant work of proof and validation is not done at some time or another all those texts written in fervour will soon be forgotten.”

- Moscovici, 1972

Having made an attempt to lay down the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings for resistance in social psychology, the next step would be to articulate a tangible way to study resistance in the discipline of social psychology. Pertaining to this articulation are the arguments put down in the previous chapters. The main point of view throughout the previous chapters has been for an ‘alternate’ paradigm for the field of social psychology – one that does not solely rely on the experimental approach or the social cognition approach that treats the individual as the absolute. The first major task in this chapter would be to elucidate on the term ‘alternative’ that has so often been used throughout this dissertation. As the title of this chapter suggests, another aim is to consolidate the observations from the review in the previous chapters to suggest a course for future research.

5.1 What alternative?

The term ‘alternative’ in social psychology is mainly a result of the crisis phase of the 1960s - 1970s. For a clarification on the term it will be relevant to borrow from Squire (1990) who gives an apt background to this crisis when she mentions the discipline’s close association with biology as well as its interest in the social being. According to Squire (1990) this results in social factors becoming comparable to biological and are also treated as belonging to the same class. Squire (1990) suggests:

Psychology’s crisis is a crisis of its relations with the social world because psychologists are continually trying to improve this situation by becoming more socially aware, but are continually unable to do so” (p. 24).

The social psychology crisis discourse takes two forms – the mainstream and the alternative. The mainstream subscribes to social psychology's dominant cognitivism, and its underlying biological rationales. However, it the alternative discourse that is more relevant here. It is this second discourse, which puts itself up against the conventional and mainstream discourse, as an alternative to it. This 'alternative' discourse does not just demand a socially wider realm of study and explanation. It also insists on a method which departs from natural-scientific standards of objectivity, and which is not restricted to experiments. Such a move is especially important for a discipline like social psychology, which, in claiming to be a science, makes method its priority (Squire, 1990). Borrowing from *Reconstructing Social Psychology* (Armistead, 1974) – Squire (1990) states that the book:

Questions the methodological and philosophical assumptions of traditional empirical social psychology, takes an interested but critical approach to third-force, phenomenological and ethno-methodological psychology, and tries, often within a Marxist framework, to find ways to think about human interaction and agency in the context of its social heterogeneity and complexity (Squire, 1990, p. 25).

In effect, the alternative's interests centres around the social construction of subjectivity rather than the biological/cognitive organism. Another dimension of the alternative is its blurring of the disciplinary boundaries to borrow from disciplines like sociology, linguistics, and philosophy.

5.2 Method, Ideology and Resistance

The term alternative that has been a common fixture in the previous chapters has been explained above. How this term is relevant for the present work will be described here. In an attempt to apprehend the prevalence of conformity and absence of resistance in social psychological literature, a number of seminal works were reviewed, out of which the first and also one of the most important was Asch's work on independence and conformity. Asch's paper titled '*Studies of Independence and Conformity: A Minority of One against a Unanimous Majority*' (Asch, 1956) clearly explicates that Asch gave as much attention to independence as to conformity. By independence Asch meant the autonomy that the participants displayed in forming a decision in a situation where the

likelihood of succumbing to group pressure is relatively high; this may be interpreted as resistance. In his work, Asch followed the experiments by interviews with the participants and from the analysis of results reported:

That we have found the tendency to conformity in our society so strong that reasonably intelligent and well-meaning young people are willing to call White Black is a matter of concern. It raises questions about our ways of education and about the values that guide our conduct. (Asch, 1955, p. 34, as cited in Bond & Smith, 1996).

However, this qualitative data has been completely overlooked by subsequent authors who have turned Asch's studies into studies only of conformity. But there certainly was evidence for resistance in Asch's work, and this has not been given due weightage.

More evidence came from a review of Zimbardo's prison study (1971) and Milgram's obedience studies (1974). Unlike Asch (1956), however, these two authors failed to acknowledge any scope of resistance in their work. In fact, it was Reicher & Haslam (2006, 2011) and Rochat & Modigliani (1995) who revisited these two studies and found evidence for resistance in them. Contrary to what Zimbardo (1989) suggested (taking from the role accounts theory), individuals do not 'naturally' subsume the roles provided to them. In fact, there are a range of factors that determine whether people themselves identify with the social positions to which they are ascribed by others (Reicher & Haslam, 2006). The question of 'why this negligence?' has been tackled in the previous chapters. What is of prime importance at this stage is to understand the learnings from such a review that may help us formulate steps to move forward and include issues that were missing in earlier works into the further inquiries on the subject.

Closely tied to the question on how to move forward is what method to adopt so as to study such phenomenon that come under the realm of 'social-psychological'. The vicious cycle of the individualistic-positivistic reductionism has been deeply criticized in the previous chapters. Having done that, it would be appropriate to clarify at this point, that the intention is not to target or blame the experimental method per se; it is to emphasize how the method has been used and abused to interpret findings that the "social" just evaporates from its explanations. Tajfel's arguments come to the rescue here. It was Tajfel who pronounced against a social psychology based on "experiments in a vacuum" (Tajfel, 1972a). In interpreting the results of an experiment, he felt, one

cannot leave out the role the context plays. It is with this point of view that the positivist paradigm has been critiqued in the earlier chapters. While the experimental method is not problematic in itself, how researchers interpret the results of the experiments becomes a point of contention. Also, a sole reliance on experiments in social psychology may not bring out important observations in the social realm. For Tajfel, questions about human social behaviour can be considered as being on a continuum which ranges from biological through psychological and sociopsychological to sociological (p. 24). He advocated a “sociopsychological” perspective approach to laboratory experimentation in the book, *The Context of Social Psychology*. The main problem that Tajfel focuses on, however, is that many theories that dominate the research output in social psychology are not sociopsychological. Tajfel (1972) states, “Ultimately it is the individual who is the unit of analysis; he reacts to others and others react to him” (p. 32). This is precisely what has been seen in the works of Milgram and Zimbardo. The point that comes across here is that researchers employing the experimental method should pay more attention in studying the ‘sociopsychological man’ (Tajfel, 1972) - i.e. the individual as a member of society. Tajfel argued that experimental subjects take their norms, beliefs and values with them into the laboratory (as cited in Billig, 2008). As Billig puts it, “...experimental results must be understood in relation to the times and contexts in which they have occurred. They do not have a universal validity” (p. 12). According to Condor (2003):

For Tajfel, the constructs of values and norms underpinned a “model of man” which presented social actors as both responsive to wider cultural context that imparted meaning to events and actions, and as capable of reflexively transforming the “situations” which constituted contexts for action (Condor, 2003. p. 156).

Condor notes that many of Tajfel’s constructs have been effectively tamed to fit the requirements of laboratory research and statistical analysis. She focuses on the construct of social context and points out that for Tajfel the term referred to a series of distal cultural and historical formations and processes; however, she contrasts this with contemporary theorists for who ‘social context’ has become a “matter of an immediate (usually visual) stimulus field” (p. 171). The term social context in terms of Tajfel, therefore was to be relatively enduring over time, but unfortunately for researchers

relying on experimental methodology the ‘social context’ may have been equated with the timescale of an experimental session (Condor, 2003).

Condor (2003) notes that a good deal of research which has addressed issues raised in Tajfel’s writings has employed experimental methodology but has never adopted the sociopsychological approach as outlined by Tajfel (1972). She writes:

It is at the point at which inferential statistics becomes presented as a description of ‘social reality’ that we can perhaps best appreciate the ironic consequences that laboratory experimentation has come to have for Tajfel’s sociopsychological project” (Condor, 2003, p. 175).

Overall therefore, Condor points at the problems related to the level of analysis of experiments that Tajfel wrote about. Also, the problems of temporality and spatiality have been mentioned. The bottom line being that rather than treat the experimental setting as a “social vacuum” we should regard it as a microcosm of society (Condor, 2003).

Related to the debate on methodology, more recently, has been the suggestion on a multiple method approach (Hewstone, 1997, as cited in McGarty & Haslam). Intersecting evidence from multiple methods increases convergent validity (Campbell & Fiske, 1959) and should be a goal to which more researchers should strive. Surely, no one method can be relied upon to study phenomena of social dimensions. And concerning anything social, as mentioned in the previous chapter is the aspect of power. As Bhavnani (1990) points out, sometimes, social psychological research has ignored the power inequalities which are consequent upon the hierarchical loadings assigned to socially ascribed characteristics. For Bhavnani the topic of central focus in conjunction with power, becomes that of empowerment. However, for defining empowerment, she takes the help of Flack (1983) in extending Foucault’s notion of power as the “capacity to challenge historical forces, and so, to make history”; thus, power becomes the capacity to influence the condition and terms of the everyday life of a community or society, and empowerment – a realization of this capacity (Bhavnani, 1990). This insight is especially helpful for a work that is in the area of resistance. Why this discussion is embedded in the topic of method is because there is an implicit assumption that qualitative research is important means of empowerment for those who are defined as the researched – in other words, such research is seen as giving a voice to the

interviewees (p. 93), and this forms an important point in the qualitative – quantitative divide, where qualitative method becomes “the” method for sociology and quantitative for psychology. However, it is vital to make clear that such divisions in understanding methodology may not be all judicious; for, as Bhavnani points out, giving voice and empowering are not necessarily the same thing. Therefore, one method cannot be just shunned for another but the two may go hand in hand to get results that are closer to reality.

5.3 Stereotype threat: the way forward

The spiel on methodology in the section above has been included in order to pave a way ahead for research on stereotype threat. Though the experimental method has been criticized in previous chapters, it cannot be completely condemned for reasons cited in the section above, and so it may be one of the methods used in the future empirical research based on the review in this dissertation.

An overview of the stereotype threat literature has already been done in the previous chapter; however, after a careful review it has been observed that certain areas of the theory remain unattended. One of the foremost critique of the research on stereotype threat may be its inability to capture the subject/participant as a part of the social-political. As stated by Tajfel each individual brings to the laboratory his/her own set of norms and values, and because of this temporal and spatial characteristic, the social context becomes a core construct to study in the stereotype threat situation.

This discussion leads to a crucial question: what should the future researches in the area of stereotype threat study? As is evident from the discussions through the chapters, an important aspect that ought to be included in the study of stereotype threat is that of power. As Deschamps states:

It is necessary to insert into social psychology a concern with problems of power, or, more precisely with relationships of power. If this is not done, (there is a) risk of skirting around a number of phenomena the study of which is indispensable for our understanding of certain forms of social behaviour. (Deschamps, 1982, p. 316).

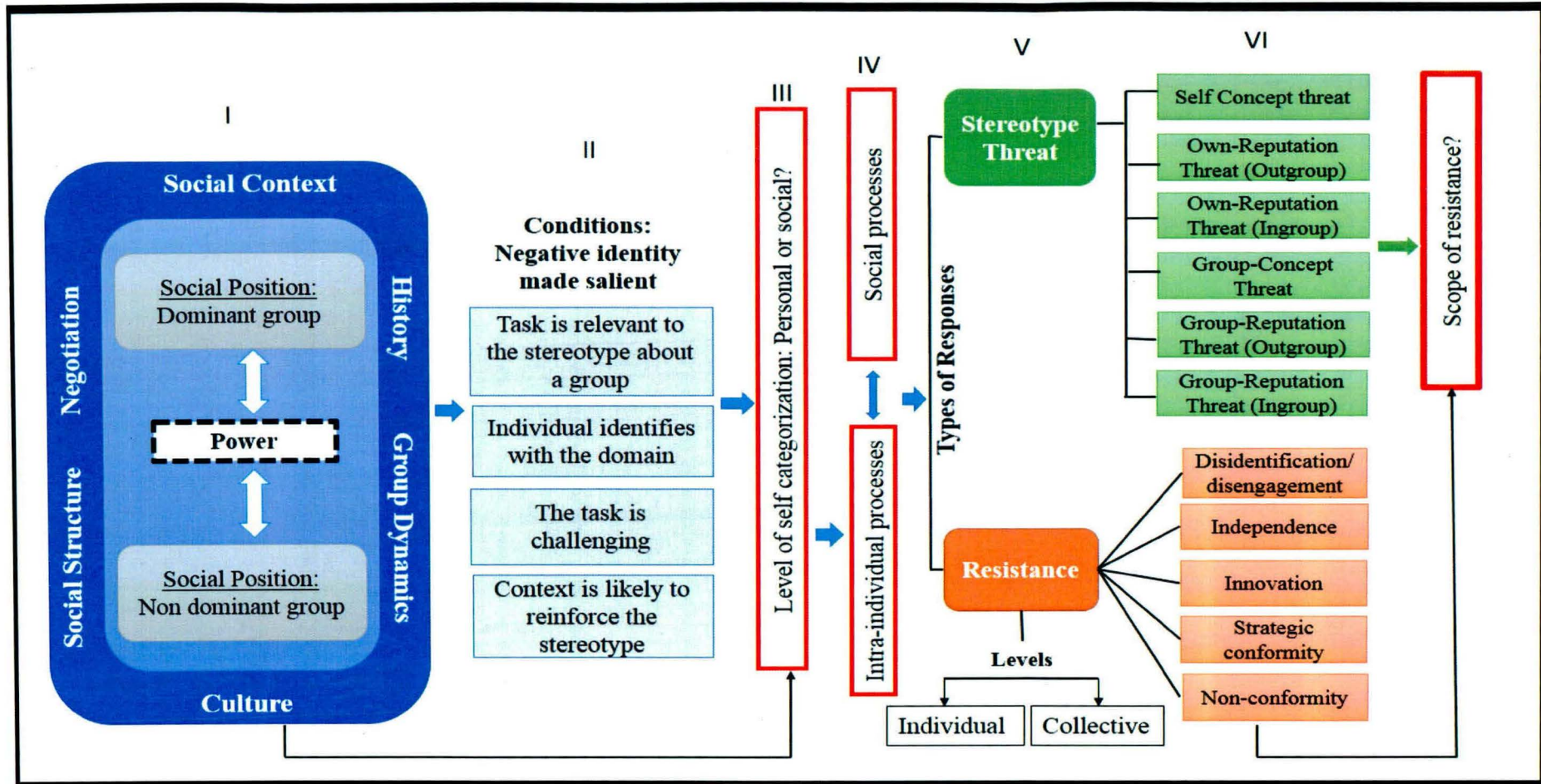


Figure 5.1: Conceptual framework depicting the interplay of various processes that may work to produce responses other than stereotype threat.

A possible result of the conditions that lead to stereotype threat which Steele and Aronson seem to have missed is that of individual and collective resistance. If one takes the alternative meaning of stereotype (social identity theory perspective), resistance may become a part of stereotype threat theory just by way of practicality. Going this way, the results of a study of stereotype threat may in fact lie closer to the work of Leach *et al.* (2010) who found that highly identified individuals may often view the societal devaluation of their in-group as a challenge, rather than a threat. The individual in such a paradigm may not be similar to the one studied in mainstream social psychology but instead, one who is deeply rooted in the social context and so the interpretation of the individual level processes will take place as closely intertwined to the social level processes.

With this understanding and a review of literature in the previous chapters in place, the idea is to move forward and develop a conceptual framework which will help in devising a proper route to study what has been proposed in this dissertation, empirically. In the original stereotype threat literature, Steele and Aronson (1995) implied that groups in the society have certain hierarchical positions with respect to certain domains and characteristics, and as a result some negative stereotypes may be attributed to them. “Women have to live in a sexist world, black people in a racist world, individuals, groups or institutions but continuously flows in a dyadic fashion, thereby implying the presence of what Moscovici called minority influence along with the presence of majority influence. Social structure, social context, culture and history, group dynamics and negotiations are included an integral part of any group level phenomenon and are included on the periphery as they form an overall part of social reality, constantly influencing outcomes and thus any explanations of research involving intergroup inequality must use these variables in its analysis and interpretation.

In the second part of the conceptual framework (denoted by II) are the conditions that according to the stereotype threat theory are important for the phenomenon of stereotype threat to occur. These include (a) the task an individual is performing is relevant to the stereotype about an individual’s group, (b) the individual is performing in a domain with which he or she identifies, (c) the task is challenging, and (d) the context in which the task is being performed is likely to reinforce the stereotype (Block *et al.*, 2011). However, an overarching condition is that the negative identity of the individual be made salient. Stereotype threat theory suggests that the

phenomenon that these conditions give rise to is, stereotype threat. But, is the experience of this threat the only possible response that individuals as part of groups are capable of? Is there any probability of the individual resisting (overtly or covertly) in such a situation? This is the main point of departure in this dissertation. The argument has been for a social psychology of resistance; that groups and individuals, as part of these groups are capable of resisting negative stereotypes instead of being negatively affected by them. According to Haslam & Reicher (2011), however quiescent people might seem, the possibility of resistance is ever present. The review and common sense both point towards a likelihood of a resistance response.

However, there are various mediational variables that may influence how an individual chooses to respond, whether by yielding to the negative stereotyping or resisting it. These mediational variables are represented in III and IV of the framework. Part III is the level of self-categorization of the individual - whether it's personal or social; part IV includes two parts: intra-individual and social processes. The level of self-categorization only influences the intra-individual process, as has been depicted in the figure. Whereas, it is hypothesized that the interaction of intra-individual and social processes leads to the final decision of stereotype threat or resistance. These processes need to be included in future researches to get a better understanding of the processes that may determine the individual's response. The level of self-categorization, for e.g. could be an important factor that explains the variability in response. Proponents of self-categorization theory characterize identity as operating at different levels of inclusiveness (Hornsey, 2008). According to Hornsey (2008), "Turner and colleagues suggest three levels of self-categorization that are important to the self-concept: the superordinate category of the self as human being (or human identity), the intermediate level of the self as a member of a social ingroup as defined against other groups of humans (social identity), and the subordinate level of personal self-categorizations based on interpersonal comparisons (personal identity)" (p. 208). For this work, however, the social and personal identity may be hypothesised as most relevant. Also, the intra individual and social processes may be influenced by the processes - social structure, social context, culture and history, group dynamics and negotiations - mentioned in part I of the framework.

In part IV of the framework on the types of responses, are the various terms in which resistance has been captured in the psychological literature. Chief among them are terms like disidentification/disengagement, nonconformity, independence,

innovation and strategic conformity (a detailed discussion on these have been done in Chapter 2). Therefore, even though not explicitly stating it, psychology has dealt with resistance in the past; even though on the surface resistance seems absent in psychological literature but it is present, in all the works that in some way or the other repudiate the trend of conformism in the discipline. It is with this view in mind that Reicher (2011) states:

...social psychology in particular, group psychology especially — needs to address both domination *and* resistance, stasis *and* movement, social reproduction *and* social change. (Reicher, 2011, p. 205).

However, as with any subjective term, operationalizing and studying resistance comes with its own set of challenges. In setting out on the task of developing a social psychology of resistance, it is important to recognize from the outset that this term describes a very diverse range of behaviours, and hence has many different meanings in the social scientific literature (Haslam & Reicher, 2011, p. 153).

Another important aspect that the other portion (stereotype threat) of part IV tries to show is the multifariousness of the stereotype threat itself. Borrowing from Shapiro & Neuberg's (2007) Multi-threat framework, which by interacting two variable source and target of threat (which are both further divided into *self and group*) result in six types of threat as shown in table 4.1. The interesting point here is that these are a result of an interaction between the self as well as the *group*, and so the prospects of applying the social identity perspective becomes conceivable at this stage. Therefore, the question of whether resistance is possible even after the experience of threat becomes relevant and is thus, included as a future question.

Keeping all this in mind, the following broad research questions are developed for future work in this area:

1. What is the probability of a resistance response in situations similar to that used in the stereotype threat framework?
2. What is the role of power in determining whether the situation results in resistance?
3. Does the social context (social structure, culture, group dynamics) influence the response of resistance

4. What is the possibility of any of the 6 types of threat (Multi-threat framework) leading further to resistance?
5. What are the possible intra-individual and social processes at play that makes individuals differ in terms choosing one out of the various responses?
6. Does the level of self-categorization (personal or social) that an individual chooses impact whether he/she is lead to resistance over experiencing stereotype threat?

All of the above discussion has been done keeping in mind the complexities involved in studying resistance. As Hollander & Einwöhner (2004) describe, studying resistance has various complexities; one of them being that resistance is not always pure. The irony is that very often individual have no choice but to support the structures of domination that they may be willing to resist. As Leblanc (1999) states “resisters after all, remain in the social systems they contest” – e.g. transsexuals resist their own gender assignment despite accepting the gender system as a whole.

Summary

The main aim of this chapter has been to consolidate the findings from the review in the previous chapters and use them to incorporate into the research on stereotype threat. The chapter started with a clarification on the term ‘alternative’ that has so often been used in the previous chapters. The discussion on methodology was also taken up to move beyond the point of critique of the positivist paradigm to elucidate upon why this critique has been made previously by expanding on an important argument by Tajfel (1972). This was followed by a discussion on the way forward for stereotype threat theory research by formulating a conceptual framework that may guide future empirical research.

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