

CHAPTER IV

REVIEW OF THE STUDIES OF INTEREST
IN RELATION TO ENVIRONMENT

The importance of environment on personality has been pointed out by the past studies in general by Super and others. This is partly because of a close interaction going on between the inner propensities or needs on the one hand and their environment at large on the other. It is, however, difficult to explain the ways and modes of interaction between the two. Yet, it is a fact that environment goes a long way in shaping and crystalizing the personality including interest and attitude.

As pointed out by Vernon (1), "interest as a complex amalgam of various subjective feelings and behaviour tendencies develops in a very curious way and shapes itself according to the contexts in which the person lives." It is thus, difficult to trace the process of development of interest although it is the final form with which we are more interested, ^{that} takes various patterns.

1 Vernon, P.E.: op. cit., p. 161.

Adamson (2) also refers to the role of environment in the formation of vocational interest. It is difficult to account for all the factors influencing interest because of the immense possibility of interaction of a number of factors, with the needs and drives forming interest.

In a study by Astin (3) on the "Effect of different college environments on the vocational choices of high aptitude students", it was assumed that during college ^{career} the student's vocational choices comes to confirm more and more to the dominant or modal choice in his college environment. This possibly includes course content provided in the college.

Meyer's (4) work also pointed out the existence of certain relationship between classroom situation and interest.

2 Adamson, J.E.: The Individual and the Environment, (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., p. 243).

3 Astin, A.W.: "Effect of Different College Environments on the Vocational Choices of High Aptitude Students", Journal of Counselling Psychology, Vol. 12, No.1, Spring 1965, pp. 28-34.

4 Meyer, G.R.: "An Enquiry into Factors Accompanying Secondary School Pupils' Interest in Science", Unpublished Ph.D. (Education) Thesis, London University, 1959.

A number of observations have been made by Lipsett (5) on the possible interaction between sociological factors and interest. He includes school, home and community as the main variables playing their role in the formation of interest. The first social group of which most children are aware is the home and little documentation is needed to demonstrate the importance of home influences. The social skills of the parents, in his opinion, contribute much to their affective capacities and skills of the child which, in turn, determines the society and the type of job in which he will be comfortable.

On a questionnaire designed to determine reasons for students' choice of a college, Smith and Lipsett (6) found that 22 per cent first heard about the college through high school teachers or counsellors and 10 per cent were most influenced by their teachers or counsellors. This points out how the choice either of the college or of the course by the youngsters is influenced by superiors e.g. teachers, counsellors, etc.

A systematic study of the factors associated

5 Lipsett, L.: "Social Factors in Vocational Development", The Personnel and Guidance Journal, January 1962, pp.432-457.

6 Smith, L. and Lipsett, L.: "Why Students Choose a Particular College", Coll. and University, 1952, 27, pp. 264-269.

with vocational choice has been conducted by Wilson (7). She has found out that quite a number of factors stimulate the vocational choice and interest of school children. Among them the influences of people and school curriculum have been particularly mentioned in the study. The influence of relatives and friends, according to Wilson, was one of the most important factors in the formation of vocational choice. The study shows that 15.5 per cent of boys choose the occupation followed either by their father or mother. Some children are reported to have chosen work similar to that of their parents. Another factor as pointed out in this study is the school curriculum. The popularity of school subject has been mentioned as one of the factors influencing the vocational choice. Different correlations between the choice of vocation and the subject offered in the school were found out and it was observed that the choices of the boys and girls are subject to environmental influences as well, e.g. industrial needs of the district, suggestions of relatives, etc.

The environment at large also consists of the sets of socio-economic values imbibed by the person living in environment. The relationship between the socio-

7 Wilson, M.D.: "Vocational Preferences of Secondary Modern School Children", British Journal of Educational Psychology, June and November, 1953, pp. 97-113.

economic status and interest patterns has been pointed out in the studies of Hyman (8), McArthur and Stevens (9), and Jordaan (10). One would infer from these findings that certain social environments encourage the development and expression of certain kinds of interests while inhibiting the development or manifestation of others. For example, men who are successfully employed in the higher level occupation tend to have more interest in literary, legal and in business contact work, and less in social welfare and sub-professional technical interest, than men in lower level occupations.

Influence of Tradition and Caste

The differences in environment are reflected also in many other ways. The influence of tradition and caste on development of interest has been mentioned by Young (11). He conducted an enquiry into the reasons given for the vocational choices of London Board School girls between

8 Hyman, B.: "The Relationship of Social Status and Vocational Interests", J. Counsel. Psychol., 3 (1956), pp. 12-16.

9 McArthur, C. and Stevens, L.B.: "The Validation of Expressed Interests as Compared with Inventoried Interests: a Fourteen Year Follow-up", J. Appl. Psychol., 39 (1955), 184-189.

10 Jordaan, J.P.: "The Relationship Between Socio-Economic Status and the Vocational Interests of Mechanically Gifted Boys", Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949.

11 Young, Sarah: "School Girls' Ideas of Women's Occupations", Studies in Education, 1902, II, 259-270.

the ages of 7 and 14 years. In this study, she concludes that while the girls on leaving school have some knowledge of the industrial possibilities for them, in general, caste, tradition, imitation are far more influential than their interests or fitness in determining vocational choice. This observation points out the scope for a hypothesis that interest and tradition might have a combined effect on vocational choice because of a possible relationship between them.

Importance of the Parents and Family

Many studies emphasize the role of parents and family in the physical and psychological development of the child. Berelson and Steiner (12) say that opinions, attitudes and beliefs are "inherited" psychologically and sociologically from one's parents, children learn them early and the learning persists into adulthood. Rosen(13) says that parents transmit values to their children in several ways, explicitly through instruction and selective reinforcement of selective responses, or implicitly through their own behaviour. He adds that the effectiveness

12 Berelson, B. and Steiner, G.A.: Human Behaviour: An Inventory of Scientific Findings, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964).

13 Rosen, B.C.: Family Structure and Value Transmission, Merrill-Palmer Quart, 10 (1): 59-76, 1964.

with which this transmission takes place differs in some families, the children have values very similar to those of the parents; in other families the value systems of the parents and children differ markedly.

Bealer et al. (14) reviewed a large body of research findings and reported that they did not find complete support for the adolescent rebellion image, but in a study of 506 Minnesota rural high school students, did find that more than three-fourths of them reported their parents to be the most important reference point in their lives.

Father's Role in the Development of Interests

According to Applezweig (15) the role of the father in the family is rapidly becoming a focal interest to the professional and the layman.

Landis (16) found the role of the father in family life an index of family integration. Closeness of children to either the mother or the father is associated

14 Bealer, R.C., Willits, F.K. and Maida, P.R.: "The Rebellions Youth Sub-Culture - a Myth, Children, 11 (2), 38-43, 1964.

15 Applezweig, D.G.: "Childhood and Mental Health: The Influence of the Father in the Family Setting", Merrill-Palmer Quart., 7 (2): 1, 1961.

16 Landis, J.T.: "A Re-Examination of the Role of the Father as an Index of Family Integration", Marriage and Family Living, 24, 122-128, 1962.

with positive values, desirable behaviour, and self-evaluation in the children. Positive family values are more closely associated with a father - than with mother - close relationships. This study gives strong support for the belief that it is how the child feels in relationship to both parents which is the most predictive of personal and family values.

Lovell (17) recently conducted an investigation into the factors determining the choice of Science subjects by the students of the training colleges. It was found out that their parents had a definite role in the selection of courses either through their suggestions or expression of their desires. In many cases there was no conflict between their parental desire and their own inclinations. Although, the parental pressure has not been found to be directly related to the choice of subjects in the training college, it was nevertheless obvious that there is a significant link between the father's attempt to impart scientific and technical knowledge and skill, and the choice of scientific subjects by his son.

17. Lovell, K. and White G.E.: "Some Influences Affecting Choice of Subjects in School and Training College", The British Journal of Educational Psychology, Vol. XXVIII, Part I, February, 1958, pp. 15-24.

Father's Occupation and Vocational Choices

The occupation of the father provides a stimulus to the selective process of determining values and hence may be influencing interest formation to certain extent. This is also supported by Fryer (18) who says, "The occupation of the father has been considered as a possible determiner of vocational interests. It is recognized that the weight of this influence might be greater or less according to the occupational conditions of choice in various countries."

Taylor (19) found among New York State School children that 16 per cent of 1,000 boys chose the occupation of the father or of a relative.

In his study of high school pupils Beeson (20) found
 / that 11 per cent desired to follow their fathers' occupation.

Bowley (21) has made a similar study among 665 working class households in England, in the endeavour

18 Fryer, D.: op. cit., p. 168.

19 Taylor, J.P.: "Children's Hopes", Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of New York, 1895-96, II, 992-1012.

20 Beeson, M.F.: "A Study of Vocational Preferences of High School Students", Voc. Gui. Mag., 1928, VII, 115-119, 139.

21 Bowley, A.L.: "The Nature and Purpose of the Measurement of Social Phenomena," London, 1915, p. 241.

to decide whether the children have risen above the fathers' occupations. On the basis of his own judgment he found that 19 per cent were in a higher position than that of the father, 71 per cent on the same plane and 10 per cent on a lower level. This study shows the influence of the total environment upon vocational development, with particular reference to England.

Henderson (22) found a significant relationship between the son's identification with his father and the similarity of father-son interest scores. He used Strong's Blanks for completion by the fathers and sons of the Career Pattern Study ^{of the} ninth grade group and a similar twelfth grade sample.

Pinney (23) found that fathers' occupation was of little importance in the selection of vocation by high school students. Likewise, Kroger and Louttit (24) in a study of high school boys also found that the first vocational choice made by these boys had very little relationship to the fathers' occupation.

22 Henderson, H.L.: "The Relationships Between Interests of Fathers and Sons and Son's Identification with Fathers", Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1958.

23 Pinney, M.: "The Influence of Home and School in the Choice of a Vocation", J. Educ. Res., 1932, 25, 286-290.

24 Kroger, R.M. & Louttit, C.M.: "Influence of Father's Occupation on the Vocational Choices of High School Boys", J. Appl. Psychol., 1935, 19, 203-212.

On the other hand, Peters (25) found that the most influential factor in the vocational choice-making process of high school students was the parent. Similarly, Dyer (26) found a high degree of permanence in the vocational choice when the family was involved in the choice. Nelson (27) found that college students selected their fathers' occupations more than chance would allow.

In studies regarding parental occupations and vocational choices the available evidence indicates that sons do follow their fathers' general occupational group. Davidson and Anderson (28) in San Diego and Bendix et al. (29) in Oakland found that sons tended to enter and remain in occupations similar to those of their fathers.

25 Peters, E.F.: "Factors which Contribute to Youth's Vocational Choice", J. Appl. Psychol., 1941, 25, 428-430.

26 Dyer, Dorothy, T.: "The Relation Between Vocational Interests of Men in College and their Subsequent Occupational Histories for Ten Years", J. Appl. Psychol., 1939, 23, 280-288.

27 Nelson, E.: "Fathers' Occupations and Students' Vocational Choices", School and Society, 1939, 50, 572-576.

28 Davidson, P.E. and Anderson, H.D.: Occupational Mobility in an American Community, (Stanford University: Stanford University Press, 1937).

29 Bendix, R., Lipset, S.M., and Malm, F.T.: "Social Origins and Occupational Career Patterns", Industry and Labour Relations Review, 1954, 7, 246-261.

Rogoff (30) in her recent book, found similar results in Marion County, Indiana.

In a more recent study Jenson and Kirchner (31) **following** arrived at **the** conclusion from their study, "The overall evidence reveals that sons do tend to follow their father's general type of occupations. When sons do not, they generally tend to make a jump up the occupational ladder. It would seem that mobility is greater from the bottom of the ladder toward the top. It would also seem that a fathers' occupation does have an important influence upon what a son will do in his future work."

In another study by Patel and Patel (32) the role of the main occupation of the parents has been regarded as an important factor influencing the choice of the agricultural courses in India. It has been found out that the main occupation of parents of 73 per cent of those taking up agriculture as a course was farming. It has been also observed that in both these studies the occupation of the parents as such has

30 Rogoff, Natalie: "Recent Trends in Occupational Mobility", Glencoe, III, Free Press, 1953.

31 Jenson, P.G. and Kirchner, W.K.: "Do Sons Follow their Fathers' Occupations?", The Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol.39, No.6, 1955, pp.419-421.

32 Patel, A.U. and Patel R.M.: "Types of Students Joining Agriculture College" and "Who or What Motivates them to do so", J. of the Regional College of Bhopal, 1967, Vol.I, No.4, pp. 213-225.

perhaps prompted them to undertake agriculture course, irrespective of the fact that they have small piece of land or no land. It is conjectured that the students joining the agriculture college were susceptible to the suggestions made by some of the relatives or friends as well. That the parents' desire has certain influence on the preferences of their children has been pointed out with emphasis. From the above findings, it is obvious that the parental occupation which is very important as a variable influencing the choice or preference even when the course i.e. agriculture does not enjoy priority of esteem in the modern Indian set up.

Influence of Environmental Experience

The environmental experience derived from the immediate surrounding ^{also} may influence the development of interest to certain extent. In the words of Fryer (33), "It is the environment that determines the specialization of our interests." In support of his statement he also presents an example as follows: "If we are brought up in a mining community, our interests are determined by that fact. For one brought up on boardship there is a different determiner." It is also hinted that the present environment may not necessarily be the sole

33 Fryer, D.: op, cit., p. 211.

determinant of one's interest. There are past experiences which might go a long way in processing one's interest. In short, experiences derived out of the past or the present environment have been assumed to have certain relationship with interest as postulated in the present investigation.

Rallison's (34) study was directed towards reflecting the role of environment in the development of scientific interest. One of the conclusions derived from the study is that environment has a definite influence on the distribution of boys' interests between the non-scientific and scientific fields. It was also pointed out that the same observation does not apply to girls.

In a subsequent study Rallison (35) inferred from the results of his investigation that no pronounced environmental effect is obvious in the distribution of interests among the various non-scientific subjects.
(36)
However, in the earlier work by Shakespeare, / an environmental influence was found to operate on the character

34 Rallison, R.: "The Scientific Interests of Senior School Children", The British Journal of Edu. Psychol. Vol. IX, Part II, June, 1939, pp. 126-128

35 Rallison, R.: "The Interests of Senior School Children in Non-Scientific Subjects", The British Journal of Edu. Psychol., Vol. XIII, Feb. 1943, Part I, pp. 39-47

36 Shakespeare, J.J.

: "An Enquiry into the Relative Popularity of School Subjects in Elementary Schools", The British J. of Edu. Psychol., Vol. VI, 1936, pp. 147-164.

of the sciences which were of interest to children. This was especially marked in the case of rural children.

The review of the past studies points out the importance of systematic inquiry into the factors influencing interest development for the purposes of counselling as well as planning. Unfortunately, most of the studies have not yielded a comprehensive picture because of their limited scope. Most of the previous investigators have taken one or two environmental variables and studied their impact on interest in isolated ways, and without taking into account the possible interaction between them. Besides, some of the investigators have come to generalizations on the basis of frequency values, without much sophistication. They have no doubt, pointed out the importance of the environmental factors covered by the present investigation. As a matter of fact, interests tend to undergo a complex process of interaction with the outside environment and surrounding with the culture and tradition, with the set of values and with everything around. It is a fact that various environmental factors could be ascribed to one's interest or preferences to a considerable extent. Yet it is difficult to have the final answer as to how and to what extent interest is processed under the influence of these factors.

It is, however, interesting to account for the relative influences of some environmental factors on interest development as most of the studies done in the past are far from being complete. Moreover, the inferences from the results of these studies are not always consistent and as such need confirmation.

Summary

The role of environmental factors in the development of interest has been a subject matter for study in the past. Most of the studies conducted are sporadic in nature and this led the investigator to take up the issue in a systematic manner. Environment may be either physical or social and each has its influence on interest, or preferences. Physical environment may include the area of residence, while by social environment, family tradition, father's occupation, parental desire or experiences through courses are included. The factors contributing to development of interest, have unfortunately been treated in isolation and the possibilities of the interaction between them ignored. A complex web of inter-relationship between various chance stimulations appears to operate behind the development and crystalization of motivational factors including interest.