UNIT 1 NATURE AND CONCEPT OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY RELATED TO OTHER DISCIPLINES

Structure

"*We can barely be distinguished from our social situations, for they form us and decide our possibilities.*" (Sartre,)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Social psychology is the study of how people think about, influence and relate to others. It emerged at the interface of psychology and sociology in the early 20th century. While Psychology analyses the nature of humans, sociology analyses the nature of society. Social psychology on the other hand, analyses the nature and the relation of man to society. The sphere of social psychology is social and its focus is individual. It is the study of individual in social situation. This social situation can be person to person interaction, person to group interaction and a group related to another group. A social psychologist uses scientific methods to study how we perceive peoples and social events, how do we influence others and get influenced, social relation and communication and group dynamics.

In this unit we will be dealing with definition and nature of social psychology, scope of social psychology, historical perspective of social psychology, and social psychology as related to other disciplines.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

l   Define social psychology;

l   Describe the nature and scope of social psychology;

l   Trace the emergence and development of modern social psychology;

l   Analyse the major contributors in the field; and

l   Explain how is it related and differentiated from the other related disciplines such as sociology, anthropology etc.

1.2 NATURE AND CONCEPT OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The last century witnessed the creation of new sciences and specialised branches for specific needs together with the technological developments that have changed the scenario of education and knowledge. New social realities generated new problems. Social psychology came into existence at the time when the world was undergoing a great upheaval. A significant number of facts in the fields of linguistics, anthropology, ethnography and archaeology needed interpretation for various facts. This need manifested itself in the development of two sciences regarded as the parents of social psychology: psychology and sociology.

Societies manifest themselves through the activities of people, through communication and interaction and in turn shape the behaviour of individuals. The study of social psychology enable us to understand the dynamics of human behaviour in social situations and what effects do these situations exert on individuals and in what ways are these situations get changed by the behaviour of the individuals. Social psychology intrudes social life by providing practical recommendations in various areas. The practical needs of the discipline have been increased by the increased demand for efficient management in the areas of industry, education, health, mass communication system, struggle against anti-social behaviour, public services and sports etc. In this unit we will discuss the concept and definition of

social psychology, its background and developments and its relation to other social sciences. Floyd Allport (1924) has defined social psychology as "the scientific study of the experience and behaviour of individuals in relation to other individuals, groups and culture". A similar definition by Gordon W. Allport (1968) states that social psychology is a discipline "that attempts to understand and explain how the thought, feeling and behaviour of an individual are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of others."

The above definitions include the elements: scientific study, experience and behaviour, individual, group and culture that throw light upon the nature of the discipline. These elements are elaborated below:

1.2.1 Social Psychology is Scientific in Nature

Social psychology is scientific in its approach to the range of topics it deals. One may find many common sense explanations and literary works that tell us about interpersonal relations, love, jealousy, aggression, altruism (helping behaviour) and the roles of individuals in groups. The difference lies in the approach that a social psychologist adopts. It adopts scientific methods which we will discuss later but in all the methods a three step basic process has been employed (McDavid and Harari, 1994):

i)   The collection of carefully made observations. Careful observation requires gathering of information about issues and processes of interest, plus an attitude of scepticism.

ii) The ordered integration of these observations and the statement of general principles.

iii) The utilisation of these general principles to predict future observations.

As an example we can take this statement, "When people try to dismiss those who ask the big public questions on being emotional, it is a strategy to avoid debate."[1] How do we proceed to check the validity of the statement? First, we have to see the big national or international issues, big in the sense they raise problems of wider concern, like the displacement of inhabitants of a particular place due to some projects. After this we will have to select a representative sample population and get their opinions. How many people take it as a serious or not so serious issue? What are the reasons for their opinions? After this a social psychologist can analyse the causes that lie behind and the socio-psychological mechanisms underlying it. What does it reveals about the nature of people and how people think about the topics of wider social concern when they are not a part of it or is there a difference when they themselves are affected?

1.2.2 Social Psychology Studies the Experience and Behaviour of Individuals

Social psychologists typically explain human behaviour as a result of the interaction of mental states and immediate social situations. In Kurt Lewin's (1951) famous heuristic formula, behaviour can be viewed as a function of the person and the environment, $B = f(P, E)$, i.e. behaviour is a function of person and environment.

Consider the following questions: Why do people help others? What is jealousy? What are its main causes and effects?

The first question is about the overt behaviour i.e. the behaviour that can be directly observed. The second is about an emotional state. Social psychology studies both the observable behaviours; and emotions and thoughts which cannot be observed directly. For these behaviours the stimulus situation can be Individuals: two person situation (dyadic)

Groups: Individual and collective organisations

Culture

"Social stimulus situation has some important capacities for change that non-social social stimulus situation lacks" (Mc David and Harari 1995: 16). Social stimulus situation and individual bear a reciprocal relation between them. Individuals act as both "a respondent to as well as an active creator of the social situation".

1.2.3 Causes of Social Behaviour and Thought

Social psychology studies the behaviour of individual as well as theorises about the causes and factors that might lie behind a particular behaviour and phenomena. The following five factors that affect social interaction have been most studied (Baron and Byron 1995)

l The action and characteristics of others.

l Basic cognitive processes: memory, reasoning, belief, ideas, judgements about others.

l Ecological Variables: direct and indirect influences of the physical environment

l The cultural context: cultural norms, membership in various groups.

l Biological aspects of human behaviour and genetic inheritance relevant to social behaviour.

Social psychology focuses on understanding the causes of social behaviour and on identifying factors that shape our feelings, behaviour and thought in social situations. The basic assumption behind is: "Accurate and useful information about even the most complex aspects of social behavior and social thought can be acquired through the use of basic methods of science" (Baron & Byron 1995; 13).

Thus social psychology is the scientific study of behaviour of individuals in social and cultural context. It explains and analyses the causes behind behaviours which may be related to the one or more than one factors mentioned above.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Elucidate the nature and concept of social psychology.

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2) What are the areas of studies of social psychology?

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3) What are the causes of social behaviour and thought?

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1.3 SCOPE OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Social psychology attempts to understand the relationship between minds, groups, and behaviors in three general ways:

1) It tries to see how the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of other(s). This includes social perception, social interaction, and the many kinds of social influence (like trust, power, and persuasion). It deals with questions like: How do small group dynamics impact cognition and emotional states?

   How do social groups control or contribute to behaviour, emotion, or attitudes of the individual members?

   How does the group impact the individual?

   How does the individual operate within the social group?

   It tries to understand the influence that individual perceptions and behaviours have upon the behaviour of groups. How does persuasion work to change group behaviour, emotion or attitudes?

2) Second, it tries to understand the influence that individual perceptions and behaviours have upon the behaviour of groups. This includes looking at things like group productivity in the workplace and group decision making. It looks at questions like:

   What are the reasons behind conformity, diversity, and deviance?

3) Third, and finally, social psychology tries to understand groups themselves as behavioural entities, and the relationships and influences that one group has upon another group. It asks questions like:

   What makes some groups hostile to one another, and others neutral or civil?

   Do groups behave in a different way than an individual outside the group?

   In European textbooks there is also fourth level called the "ideological" level. It studies the societal forces that influence the human psyche.

1.4 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS: THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

To understand the contribution of social psychology and what is distinct about it, we need to know its historical origins. The formation of pre-conditions of social psychology is as a whole the same as the development of any other scientific discipline. The socio-psychological ideas originally took shape within the realm of philosophy and then gradually branched off from the system of psychological knowledge. First we will briefly discuss the social thought before the advent of social science and then discuss the second stage of the development of social psychology which is deemed to be "more productive. Current trends of the discipline will be discussed later in the Unit 4.

1.4.1 Social Thought Before the Advent of Social Science

Two earlier forms of social thought over the centuries are Platonic and Aristotelian.

Platonic thought emphasised the primacy of state over the individual who had to be educated to become truly social.

Aristotelian thought states that human being is social by nature and nature can be trusted to enable individuals to live together and to enter personal relationships from which families, tribes and ultimately the state will naturally develop.

In modern times these two traditions of social thought have been known as socio centred approach and individual centred approach. Socio centred approach emphasises the determining function of social structures (systems, institutions and groups) for individual experience and behaviour. According to the individual centred approach social systems are said to be explicable in terms of individual processes and functions. For Hegel (1970-1831), the German philosopher, the state is not only the ultimate form of society but the incarnation of the objective social mind of which individual minds are active participants. The notion of Group Mind derived from Hegel's supra-individual nature.

Social psychology from its beginning has been defined as the scientific study of the individual in the social context. Individualism has been an inherent property of the discipline. Individualistic doctrine says that all the explanations of individual social phenomena are to be rejected unless they are expressed in terms of individual. Individualism in psychology has been characterised and criticised for the self centred denial of the other. Individualism has appeared in two forms in sociological thought:

Hedonism: People act in order to secure and maintain pleasure and to avoid and reduce pain.

Utilitarianism: The doctrine that advocates the pursuit of the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

For most modern theories of conditioning and of motivation, the underlying ideas of individual satisfaction (reinforcement, reward, reduction of stress, of dissonance, uncertainty) are variations of the pleasure or utility principle. Utility and satisfaction are important constructs involved in many social psychological theories.

From Machiavelli (1513) and Thomas Hobbes (1651) the concept of power and its role in social relationships returned in social psychology. The concept of social power (social influence) found its proper frame of reference in the field theory and social exchange theory. In Lewinian field theory 'power' became the term for the potential to influence others while control and influence refer to the power of action. Research areas where power has been studied are: aggression, conformity to group pressure and obedience to authority, and power in language.

Modern social psychology was also influenced by the developments in the nineteenth century in two major areas: sociology and theory of evolution. We will discuss these influences later under the titles: social psychology and other disciplines and the influence of evolutionary theory will be discussed in current trends in social psychology.

1.4.2 The Second Stage of Development: Social Psychology Emerges as a Discipline

In the process of branching off from the psychology as a separate discipline, three moments are important to be outlined (Galina Andreyeva 1990):

The requirement concerning the solution of socio-psychological problems which aroused in various related sciences.

The processes involved in the separation of socio-psychological problems within the two parent disciplines: psychology and sociology.

Finally, the description of the first forms of independent socio- psychological knowledge.

In the mid 19th century, the first forms of socio-psychological theories that appeared, three were most important in terms of their influence: *people's psychology, mass psychology and the theory of instincts of social behaviour*. These theories developed in the background of philosophical and descriptive tradition, hence their nature was speculative and abstract.

1.4.3 People's Psychology

People's psychology developed as one of the first forms of socio-psychological theory in Germany in the mid 19th century. Most outstanding creators of people's psychology were Moritz Lazarus (1824-1903) and Heymann Steinthal (1823-1893). In 1859 the journal *People's Psychology and Linguistics* was founded in which the article by Lazarus and Steinthal entitled "*Introductory Thoughts on People's Psychology*" was printed. The article expressed the idea that the main force of history is the people, or the 'spirit of the whole', which can be seen in art, religion, language, myths, customs etc. The individual consciousness is only its product, a link in a certain mental connection. The task of social psychology was to perceive the psychological essence of the spirit of the people and discover the laws that guide the spiritual activity of the people.

The views of Wilhem Wundt (1832-1920) furthered the development of People's psychology. Wundt (1900) proposed that psychology consists of two parts: physiological psychology and people's psychology (*Völkerpsychologie*: German word for people's psychology). Physiological psychology, in his views was an

experimental discipline, but experimentation is not useful for the study of higher mental processes: thinking and language. For the areas like language, myths, customs and art people's psychology need to adopt other methods.

The views proposed by Wundt were criticised by Vygotsky. People's psychology considered language, myths, customs, art and religion as objectives of study. Vygotsky called these *clots of ideology* or *crystals*. The task of psychology he proposed was not to study these crystals but the solution itself. He opposed the thought that social psychology should study the mentality of collective personality. The personality of the individual, he said, is also social and is therefore an object of study in social psychology. Social psychology focuses on the mentality of the separate individual and collective psychology – on personal psychology under collective manifestation (e.g. army and church). Social psychology is the study of cultural and historical determinati0on of mentality. Lev Vygotsky dealt with two questions directly related to the development of social psychology. The higher mental functions (arbitrary memory, active attention, abstract thinking and volitional act) could not be considered immediate functions of the brain, roots of these functions lie in social condition. He expounded upon the idea of cultural historical determination of all mental processes.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What is the scope of social psychology?

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2) Trace historically the development of social psychology.

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3) What factors contributed to the emergence of modern social psychology?

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4) What was the nature of social thought before the advent of social science?

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5) Discuss social psychology emerging as a discipline.

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6) What is meant by people's psychology? Discuss in the context emergence of social psychology?

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1.4.4 Mass Psychology

This theory emerged in France in the latter half of the 19th century. The creators of mass psychology Italian Lawyer Scipio Sighele (1868-1913) and French sociologist Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931) began with Gabrial Trade's (1843-1904) basic ideas on the role of irrational movements in social behaviour and the role of imitation. According to Le Bon any accumulation of people represented the idea of the mass with depersonalisation and predominance of emotions over intellect, the general loss of intellect and the loss of the sense personal responsibility. The events like mass movements in the late 19th and early 20th century, rapid social and economic changes due to industrialisation and urbanisation wereconducive to mass psychology but like people's psychology it did not develop within the context of academic psychology. It did not have any significant consequences as regards the future of social psychology.

1.4.5 The First Textbooks of Social Psychology

The year 1908 is considered to the year of final emergence of social psychology as an independent scientific discipline. This year two books appeared with the title social psychology: *An Introduction to Social psychology* by William McDougall and the other *Social Psychology* by sociologist Edward A. Ross. Before these two works in 1897, James Mark Baldwin's work, *Social and Ethical Interpretation in Mental Development* was published in New York which can be considered as one of the first systematic manuals in social psychology.

According to E. A. Ross social psychology deals with uniformities in feeling, belief, volition and action. Uniformities were to be explained by the capacities for imitation and suggestion operating among individuals collectively. McDougall's theory proposed that inborn instincts are the cause of social behaviour. In his views, tendencies of imitation and suggestion are rooted in their biological nature. Imitation supposedly grew out of non-specific innate tendency, whereas suggestion was seen stemming from an instinct to submit to a prestigious person or symbol.

In spite of great popularity of McDougall's ideas, they played a negative role in the history of science. Recognition of instincts as the motive force behind the social behaviour gave importance to the irrational and unconscious motives. Human

understanding and thought processes were not given much attention. The overcoming of the theory of instincts is deemed to be an important milestone in the formation of scientific social psychology.

1.4.6 The Beginning of Experimental Research

The early 20th century especially the period after the First World War, is considered the beginning of the metamorphosis of social psychology into an experimental science. But the best known of the early laboratory study was Norman Triplett's 1897 experiment on "the dynamogenic effects of pace making". It was the first study of an individual's performance is affected by the presence of others.

The experimental investigations by Walter Moede in Europe and Floyd Allport in US served as a milestone in this process. Allport compared the performance of individuals working alone with that of the persons working either before an audience or in the presence of others engaged in the same activity. He found that the latter condition often improved performance. The phenomenon is known as the social facilitation effect. In 1924 Allport published the first social psychology textbook making extensive use of experimental research. This work encouraged the growth of an experimentally oriented social psychology.

The next two decades (after Allport's publication) were marked by systemic investigations in the field in the areas such as the development of attitude measures, social norms, aggression, leadership and social influence (conformity). Theodore Newcomb (late 1930s) assessed the social and political attitudes held by college students and demonstrated how their attitudes were modified by the views prevailing at the college (Peer influence). Muzafer Sherif (1935) studied the nature and impact of social norms- rules indicating how individuals ought to behave. In 1939, Dollard, Doob and Miller demonstrated the relationship between frustration and aggression. They concluded that frustration produces instigation to aggression. Kurt Lewin, Lipitt and White (1939) carried out revealing research on the nature of leadership and related group processes. The main attention began to be focused on the small groups which facilitated experimental method.

From the earlier thoughts of group mind and depersonalisation, social psychological theories at this period emphasised the overriding importance of the individual's thought and understanding. In 1948, a revolution got under way in social psychology. Precursor to this change was the establishment of Research Centre for Group Dynamics at MIT by eminent theorist Kurt Lewin. Kurt Lewin is often referred to as the father of applied social psychology. Experimental works due to the efforts of Kurt Lewin put social psychology as a science in a more advantageous position. He believed that significant social problems can be investigated in the laboratory with experimentation. He favoured the analyses based on individual's understanding of the situation surrounding him or her.

All the enthusiasm for experimental orientation stemmed from the need to provide authentic knowledge about the real problems of society. But it was begun to be realised that skillfully conducted laboratory research created a distance between social reality and the topics under investigation. The social content from these researches was taken away in the favour of experimentation. In the mid 20th century, social psychology faced the problem of analysis of the enormous

experimental research by theoretical knowledge. The need for the proportional development of two spheres of scientific knowledge – the theoretical and the experimental was felt. 1950s and later, many psychologists contributed significantly by theoretical explanations in the areas such as conformity (Soloman Asch 1956, 1958), cognitive dissonance (Leon Festinger 1950, 1954, 1957) and attribution theory (Fritz Heider, Herold Kelly and E. E. Jones). In this decade, social psychology was brought closer to the cognitive psychology dealing with thought, judgment and decision making.

1.4.7 Middle Range Theories

The need of theoretical explanation for the experimentations in the social psychological areas gave birth to the theories specifically designed to be applied in the areas of social psychological research.

The idea of creating "middle range theory" was first developed by Robert Merton. Middle range theories are the theories that account for a specific aspect of social behaviour and do not try to encompass all of social life. Social psychological theories tend to be specific and focused, rather than global and general. The field theory of Kurt Lewin is often considered a model of middle range theory. The greater part of social psychological theories existing today (theories of frustration aggression, changes of attitudes, cognitive dissonance, cooperation and competition etc.) belong to the bracket of middle range theories. At present, the theories of middle range are mostly concentrated around four trends: behaviourism, psychoanalysis, cognitivism and interactionism. The theories from the vantage point of behaviourism, psychoanalysis and cognitivism are the socio-psychological variants of main stream psychological thought; and interactionism represents theories mainly contributed by sociological perspective. Some characteristic attributes of major psychological theories are tabulated below:

Table: **Major Psychological Theories and their relationship to social psychology**
(Source: McDavid & Harari, 1994: P.37)

Theory	Relationship to Social Psychology
	The Individual in Society
Psychoanalytic	Model of man: Homo valence (the striving man). Man as a creator of society, rather than its product.
Cognitive	Homo Sapiens (the thinking man). Society is represented in man's experience as a part of his life space.
Behaviouristic	Homo Mechanicus (the reactive man). Society provides a set of stimulus conditions that operate as cues and reinforcers for behaviour
	Contributions to Scoial Psychology
Psychoanalytic	Study of personality development and socialisation, cross cultural comparison of child rearing, aggressive behaviour and its roots, interpersonal identification and family interaction.
Cognitive	Studies of attitudes and values, language and thought, group dynamics and action research.

Behaviouristic	Experimental and theoretical, Study of socialisation, social reward and punishment.
Psychoanalytic Cognitive Behaviouristic	**Current Status in Social Psychology** Decreasing significance. Maintaining Stable significance. Increasing significance

Clark Leonard Hull's (introduced the concept of *intervening variables*) . laboration of the theory frustration-aggression of Norman Miller and John Dollard is the major contribution of behaviourism to social psychology. Neobehaviourism seeks to create a standard of scientific research in social psychology, involving thoroughly developed laboratory experiments and Theodore W. Adorno's *The Authoritative Personality* (1959) is a good example of psychoanalytic contribution to social psychology. Authoritarian personality describes a cluster of traits that predispose individuals towards acceptance of extreme political ideologies such as Nazism.

Cognitivism in social psychology began with Gestalt psychology and the field theory of Kurt Lewin. The examination of social behaviour from the point of view of cognitive processes of the individual is its basic principle. The theory of cognitive balance states that main motivating factor of individual behaviour is the demand for the establishment of a balance of his cognitive structure.

The theory of balanced structures by Fritz Heider, the theory of communicative acts by Theodore Newcomb, the theory of cognitive dissonance by Leon Festinger and the theory of congruence by C. E. Osgood and Tannenbaum all relate to the theory of cognitive balance. Cognitivism emphasised the role of humanisation in social psychology, underlining the role and the significance of mental formations in explaining the social behaviour of the individual. Interactionism includes George Herbert Mead's work on the theory of symbolic interactionism.

However in contemporary social psychology interactionism include not only the development of Mead's ideas, but also a group of different theories combined under the one name, namely role theory and reference group theory. In all theories, an attempt is made to establish the social determinants of human behaviour, by introducing a key concept of interactionism within which the personality is shaped. However the analysis of social determinants of behaviour is reduced to the statement of interaction. Therefore, the logical nature of the interactionist orientation proves to be, to a significant degree external. The fundamental methodological problems of socio-psychological knowledge remain unresolved.

1.4.8 Historical Developments: Summary Table

Table: Summary table of Historical development of social psychology

Periods	Major Trends
The Early years: 1908 – 1939 McDougall (1908):	Social behaviour stems from innate tendencies or instincts. Floyd Allport (1924): Social Facilitation Effect; emphasized the value of experimentation. Sherif (1935): Social norms and conformity. Kurt Lewin et al (1939): Leadership and related group processes.

Social Psychology: The Youth: 1940s – 1960s	Expansion of Scope: every aspect of social behaviour included in the research; 1948: a revolution got under way favouring the concept of human behaviour as thoughtful and purposive rather than guided by instincts, Kurt Lewin: Experimental works due to the efforts of Kurt Lewin put social psychology as a science in a more advantageous position 1960s: fully came off age. Study of the influence of groups and group membership on individual behaviour, relation between personality traits and social behaviour. Leon Festinger (1957): the theory of cognitive dissonance.
A Maturing Field: 1970s and 1980s	Rapid pace change of the last decade accelerated. New topics and perspectives emerge: Attribution (How to infer the causes of other's behaviours), gender differences and environmental psychology, growing influence of cognitive perspective and growing emphasis on application (personal health, legal processes, work settings, education and population studies)
1990s and beyond	Two major trends from the past decade continued, namely, growing influence of cognitive perspective and increasing interest in application. The study of affective states in determining social behaviour gained impetus; Multicultural perspective: the study of universal and cultural social behaviours.
Current Trends	Evolutionary social psychology, the changing world, technology and human social behaviour, Neurocognitive perspective and social behaviour.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What is Mass psychology? Explain with examples.

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2) Discuss the publication of the textbooks in social psychology.

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3) Enumerate the various experiments that were conducted in social psychology.

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4) What are middle range theories? Explain

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5) Discuss the various theories in terms of social psychology.

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1.5 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND OTHER DISCIPLINES

In the broadest terms, the central task of social psychology is the systematic study of the relation between the individual and the collective phenomena. This daunting task overlaps with that of other social sciences. Many scholarly fields study social behaviour, viz., sociology, anthropology, economics, political science and sociolinguistics. The social psychological approach differs from disciplines that study large scale societal problems and from those that focus on the individual. Social psychology is delineated from the other areas of social study by both its method and its approach. There is some overlapping and sharing with other discipline in terms of theories and content.

Three levels of analysis

Three different levels of analysis have been recognised which tell us about the differences in the approach of various social sciences.

1.5.1 Societal Level Analysis

The goal of societal analysis is to identify links between broad social forces and general patterns of social behaviours. Social behaviour from this viewpoint is explained by factors like economic hard times, class conflicts etc. This analytical approach is adopted by sociologists, economists and political scientists. These scholars attempt to understand general patterns of social behaviours, such as homicide rates, voting behaviours and consumer spending. To study violence in urban areas, social scientists might identify relationships between rates of crime and factors such as poverty, immigration or industrialisation.

1.5.2 Individual Level Analysis

This level of analysis is used by clinical and personality psychologists who explain behaviour in terms of a person's unique personality characteristics and life history. According to this viewpoint, with the help of personality traits and motives the reasons of people's behaviour can be explained. Individual differences in childhood experiences, ability, motivation and personality are emphasised. At this level of analysis, violent crimes will be explained in terms of unique histories and characteristics of the criminal.

1.5.3 Interpersonal Level Analysis

The focus of a social psychologist lies on a person's current social situation. The constituents of social situation are— the other people, their attitudes and behaviours and their relationship to the individual. This emphasis is based on the idea, 'change the social context, individual will change'. To understand the violent crime, social psychologist might consider the inter-personal relations. One social explanation suggests that frustrating situations make people angry and increase their tendency to act aggressively.

1.5.4 Amalgamation of Sociology and Psychology

It borrows and uses concepts from both the disciplines: psychology and sociology. For a sociologist, the basic unit of analysis is the social system (groups, institutions, cultures, families etc). For a psychologist, the basic unit of analysis is the individual. But, individual and social system cannot be studied without the reference to either of these. As one is contained in the other, and the existence of the other is nothing without the first. It is difficult and even incomplete if one is explained without the other. The difference may lie in the angle of approach, the purpose and the focus of study. Various views gave birth to two forms of social psychology: psychological social psychology and sociological social psychology. From the sociological point of view social psychology is the study of mass phenomena of psyche, the psychology of classes and large social groups, elements of group mentality (traditions, morals, customs etc.). The psychological social psychology puts individual at the centre and focuses at the mental peculiarities of the individual (personality typology) and the position of individual in the collective. Briefly these can be defined as:

Psychological Social Psychology (PSP): Emphasis upon subject's mental processes, dispositions, experiences and immediate social situation.

Sociological Social Psychology (SSP): Emphasis upon subject's place in social order, their socialised roles and historical social context.

Another approach emphasises the synthesis of both. According to this point of view social psychology is a science that studies both the mass mental phenomenon and the position of an individual in a group. It includes the study of social psychology of the individual, communities and communication, social relations and the forms of cultural activities.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Discuss social psychology as related to other disciplines.

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2) What are the three levels of analysis. Explain with examples

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3) What is societal level analysis?

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4) What is individual and interpersonal analysis?

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5) Discuss the amalgamation of sociology and psychology to make social
psychology.

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1.6 INTERDISCIPLINARY VS. INTRADISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TO SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The interdisciplinary approach emphasises the incorporation of significant elements
from various disciplines. This incorporation can be found more at the level of
content from the diverse disciplines especially sociology. Intradisciplinary approach
conceptualises social psychology as a specialty branch within the discipline of
psychology. This approach defines both the problems and phenomena together
with its method. A psychologist maintains his investigative focus on the individual
against a background of contextual factors. From the intradisciplinary perspective,
social psychology is defined as the psychological study of the individual related
to the social system. Thus social psychological phenomena can be explained on
at least four levels as given below:

l Personal attributes

l Actual situations in which the psychological phenomena is studied

l   Reference to the people's social position

l   The ideologies and belief systems to which they adhere.

If one looks at the recent developments, one may find that all of them transcend a narrow definition of social psychology, all of them require that their proponents be versed in one or more neighbouring disciplines, above all sociology and cognitive psychology together with anthropology, political science, philosophy and linguistics. All of them contribute to the intellectual vitality of the field in all its branches. Whether the debate among them will lead to a more unified social psychology or to a greater separateness only the time will tell. Here, we will briefly discuss the relation of social psychology to sociology, anthropology and sociolinguistics.

1.6.1   Social Psychology and Sociology

Sociology is defined as the study of society. Sociology is the social science dealing with social system and structures, relationships, institutes and entire societies. The emergence of sociology in the nineteenth century greatly contributed to the development of social psychology. John Stuart Mill, Auguste Comte and others laid the foundation for social psychology by asserting that human social cognition and behaviour could and should be studied scientifically like any other natural science. A sociologist begins with the domain of society and works towards the individual while the social psychologist reverses the order. As far as social psychology is concerned it is sometimes difficult to demarcate it from social psychology with a sharp line as both the disciplines invest most of their resources in the ambiguous middle ground. Social psychology exchanges freely ideas, methods and models with sociology. In fact this exchange is so rich and ubiquitous that it is often difficult to distinguish the two fields. Being the study of individual in a society, the vantage point of social psychology is more prone to the individual and the experimental method. But with the expanding application, social psychology is adopting the other methods like ethnography and qualitative research more popular with the domain of sociology.

1.6.2   Social Psychology and Anthropology

Broadly considered as to be the scientific study of human beings, Anthropology originated as a discipline in the Darwinian revolution of the middle of the nineteenth century. Underpinning all the anthropological works is the concern of mapping human variation (biological, behavioural and cultural) and to explain, interpret and understand the directions in the development of human behaviour. The main topics of investigation are primitive societies, cultural relativism, unity of human species, human diversity and human evolution. Social psychology can make good use of the theories about cultures and societies which might assist in the explanation of the individual behaviour in a particular society. Anthropology can give a clear picture of the cultural and social context to a social psychologist.

1.6.3   Social Psychology and Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics includes the areas of study which connects language with society. The discipline uses theories and methods from diverse field like psychology, sociology and anthropology to understand language in societies. Sociolinguistics is centrally concerned with methodology. It is firmly based on the observation of actual, preferably spontaneous speech behaviour. The studies within this field have contributed in terms of understanding language uses and behaviours of peoples in

society. The study of language contributes not only in terms of language behaviours but the rich data helps in building theories. The field of sociolinguistics equally borrows theories from social psychology to draw inferences about behaviours from the linguistic data.

Self Assessment Questions

1) How are interdisciplinary and Intradisciplinary approaches different?

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2) Discuss the relationship between sociology and social psychology

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3) Elucidate the relationship between social psychology and anthropology.

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4) What is the relationship between social psychology and sociolinguistics?

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1.7 LET US SUM UP

Social psychology is the scientific study of the experience and behaviour of individuals in relation to other individuals, group and culture. Social psychology theorises about the causes and factors behind a particular behaviour and phenomena these can be action and characteristics of others, basic cognitive processes: memory, reasoning, belief, ideas, judgements about others, ecological variables: direct and indirect influences of the physical environment, cultural context: cultural norms, membership in various groups and biological aspects of human behaviour and genetic inheritance relevant to social behaviour.

The socio-psychological ideas originally took shape within the realm of philosophy and then gradually branched off from the system of psychological knowledge. The first forms of socio-psychological were most: people's psychology, mass psychology

and the theory of instincts of social behaviour. Experimental works due to the efforts of Kurt Lewin put social psychology as a science in a more advantageous position. At present, the field witnessed the growing influence of cognitive perspective and increasing interest in application.

The social psychological approach differs from disciplines that study large scale societal problems and from those that focus on the individual.

1.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) Define Social psychology. Discuss its nature and scope.

2) Write a note on the social thought before the advent of social psychology.

3) "A revolution got under way favouring the concept of human behaviour as thoughtful and purposive rather than guided by instincts." In the light of the statement explain the developments in the field of social psychology.

4) What are the three levels of analysis in social sciences? Which level of analysis would you relate to the social psychology?

5) What is the difference between the psychological social psychology and sociological social psychology?

6) Discuss the relation of social psychology with other social sciences.

7) What do you understand by the interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary approach?

1.9 GLOSSARY

Social psychology	: Social psychology is the scientific study of the experience and behaviour of individuals in relation to other individuals, group and culture.
Hedonism	: People act in order to secure and maintain pleasure and avoid and reduce pain.
Utilitarianism	: The doctrine that advocates the pursuit of the greatest happiness of the greatest number.
People's psychology	: The main force of history is the people, or the 'spirit of the whole' which can be seen in art, religion, language, myths, customs etc. The individual consciousness is only its product, a link in a certain mental connection.
Mass psychology	: Emphasised the role of irrational movements in social behaviour and the role of imitation. Any accumulation of people represented the idea of the mass with depersonalisation and predominance of emotions over intellect, the general loss of intellect and the loss of the sense personal responsibility.

Middle range theories	:	The theories that account for a specific aspect of social behaviour and do not try to encompass all of social life. Social psychological theories tend to be specific and focused, rather than global and general.
Societal analysis	:	To identify links between broad social forces and general patterns of social behaviours.
Individual level of analysis	:	Used by clinical and personality psychologists who explain behaviour in terms of a person's unique personality characteristics and life history
Interpersonal level of analysis	:	The focus of a social psychologist lies on a person's current social situation. The constituents of social situation are- the other people, their attitudes and behaviours and their relationship to the individual.

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UNIT 2 SOCIAL COGNITION: ATTRIBUTION THEORY

Structure

2.0   INTRODUCTION

The way in which people come to an understanding of both others and themselves has been a major focus of study for social psychologists. The topic is critical for an understanding of social behaviour because how people process information and make judgments of others and how they explain the causes of behaviour have an important influence on their own behaviour. Moreover, as you will see in this unit, social psychologists have found that learning how people understand their own and others' behaviour provides a clear basis for solving a variety of everyday

problems ranging from insomnia to poor school performance. This unit is focused on the process of understanding and evaluating others. We will first discuss person perception and social cognition: how people make sense of information they have about an individual to form an overall impression and how that information is stored and organised in memory. Next, we will discuss attribution theory which encompasses how people explain the causes of both their own and others' behaviour.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

l Define person perception;

l Explain the various factors contributing to person perception;

l Define social cognition;

l Describe the characteristic features of social cognition;

l Explain impression formation;

l Describe the factors contributing to impression formation;

l Expalin attribution theory; and

l Analyse the various types of errors in attribution.

2.2 PERSON PERCEPTION AND SOCIAL COGNITION

In an early study on person perception Harold Kelly (1950) gave a group to students one of two descriptions of a lecturer whom they had never met, and then had the lecturer lead a discussion. In one case, students were told that the lecturer was a rather warm person, industrious, critical, practical and determined. But in a second condition, a group of students was told that the same lecturer was "a rather cold person, industrious, critical, practical and determined." The crucial difference was the substitution of the word cold for warm in the second description. You may be surprised to learn that the substitution made a drastic change in the way the lecturer was viewed in the two conditions. Students who were told that the lecturer was cold rated him far less positively after the discussion than those who were told that he was warm, although the behaviour of the lecturer was invariant across the two conditions.

The Kelley experiment, now considered a classic, illustrates an early view of person perception, which concentrated on the way in which individuals focus on particular traits when forming overall impressions of others. According to this perspective, certain traits play an unusually large role in determining a general impression. These traits are known as central traits. *Central traits* serve to organise the impression and provide a framework for interpreting information that is received subsequently. Solomon Asch (1946) suggested that the meaning of additional descriptive traits is altered by the presence of a central trait. Thus the word "determined" when describing and individual means something very different, depending upon whether it is preceded by the word "warm" or "cold"

2.3 COGNITIVE ALGEBRA: ADDITIVE AND AVERAGING MODELS

More precise models were suggested for impression formation. Two of these are: Additive and averaging models.

i) **The additive model** (Anderson 1965) suggests that we simply add together the bits of information we have about a person to form a judgment. For example, if we learn that a new acquaintance is adventurous, bold and caring, we simply assign each one a value on some hypothetical scale and add them together. If, for instance, one rates adventurousness as 4; boldness as 5, and caring as 9 (on an 11 point scale) the overall impression will be expressed in mathematical terms as 4+5+9 =18. A consequence of such a model is that the inclusion of more positive traits on a list will lead to a more positive impression.

ii) **The averaging model** (Anderson, 1974) on the other hand suggests that although we start in the same way there is an additional step in which we divide by the number of traits to form and average. (Hence, we get 4+5+9=18 /3 = 6). What is particularly important about this model is that the inclusion of additional information does not necessarily make the impression more positive, rather, it depends on the nature of the new traits. Hence, if we learn that the person is also neat and we scale neat as a 2, the overall impression drops: (4+5+9+2)=20/4=5. In contrast, a model employing addition would suggest that additional information would result in a more positive impression.

Of these two models averaging model has shown accurate predictions. But applicability of such research in actual social situations has been questioned. First people are restricted to a small finite set of trait when evaluating other parsons; secondly the richness of social information is neglected. Despite such limitations, research on impression formation has provided important insights into how information about people is processed and combined.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Discuss person perception and social cognition.

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2) What is cognitive algebra?

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3) Explain the additive and average model in person perception.

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2.4 IMPRESSION FORMATION

In a classic study Luchins (1957) gave subjects a two paragraph description of a boy named Jim. One paragraph Jim walking to school with others and participating in a member of other activities. In short he was portrayed as an extrovert. In the second paragraph, the activities described were similar but Jim did them all alone, thus appearing introvert. Subjects were presented with the two paragraphs, but the order was reversed according to condition. When asked to form an overall impression of Jim subjects' responses demonstrated a strong *primacy effect*. Primacy effect refers to the condition in which early information has a stronger impact than later information. If subject had read the extrovert paragraph first, they found them considerably more extraverted than if they had read the introvert paragraph first, and vice versa. More recent work confirms that indeed early information is weighted more heavily than later information. This holds true even when the later information is very salient and clearly contradicts earlier information.

On the other hand **recency effects**, in which later information is given more credence than early information, have been reliably produced under three sorts of conditions. First, when people are asked specifically to make a second evaluation following the presentation of new information, late information takes on more importance than earlier information. Second, if there is a relatively large time span between the presentation of new information and the initial exposure, recency effects are likely to occur. Finally, later information is given heavier weight if the task is one which people assume that practice might improve performance.

2.4.1 Schemas: Holding our Impressions Together

Given the diversity of people and settings that one encounters passing through everyday life, we might suspect that people could easily become overwhelmed with the sheer quantity of information relating to what others are like. To avoid becoming overwhelmed, people need to organise their impressions of others. The way that they are able to do this is through the production of schemas. Schemas are organised bodies of information stored in memory. The information in a schema provides a representation of the way in which social world operates as well as allowing us to categorise and interpret new information related to the schema.

We all hold schemas relating to everyday objects in our environment. We might, for instance, hold a schema for automobiles –we have an idea of what they look like, how they are used, what they can do for us and how to differentiate them from other vehicles such as buses and horse and buggy. More importantly, from a social psychological point of view we hold a schema for particular people (one's mother, girlfriend, boyfriend, brother, or sister) and of classes of people playing a given role (mail carriers, teachers, or librarians). Each of these schemas provides a way of organising behaviour into meaningful wholes.

2.4.2 Prototypes

The personality types that we derive in the case of person perception are organised into schemas known as *prototypes*. Prototypes are schemas that organise a group of personality traits into a meaningful personality type. For example, Nancy cantor and walter Mischel (1979) suggest a frequently held prototype concerns a person labeled on a general level as committed.

At the most specific level called the subordinate level— the prototype consists of different types of committed individuals for example monks, nuns and activists. At the middle level of specificity, there are basic classes of individuals: the religious devotee or social activist. The subordinate and middle levels of specificity are subsumed under the broader super ordinate level which encompasses the prototype as a whole.

The importance of prototypes lies in three directions:

i)   Prototypes allow people to recall more readily, recognise and categorise information about others. In a sense then information processing capabilities are enhanced through the use of prototypes.

ii) Prototypes help us to organise the social world around us. By observing relatively few traits or behaviours, we are able to categorise people into certain prototypes and this in turn allows us to form expectations about others' behaviours.

iii) Prototypes allow people to plan behaviour in social interactions more readily.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Define Impression formation.

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2) What are the factors that contribute to impression formation?

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3) What are schemas? How do they hold our impressions together?

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4) Define prototype and indicate their role in impression formation.

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2.5 ATTRIBUTION: EXPLAINING THE CAUSES OF BEHAVIOUR

We turn now to an examination of how people observe behaviour and draw inferences about what motivates behaviour. The process of attribution— an individual's understanding of the reasons behind peoples' behaviour. Attribution theory is concerned with how individuals interpret events and how this relates to their thinking and behaviour. Heider (1958) was the first to propose a psychological theory of attribution, but Weiner and colleagues (e.g., Jones et al, 1972; Weiner, 1974, 1986) developed a theoretical framework that has become a major research paradigm of social psychology.

2.5.1 Situational vs. Dispositional Causes

Behaviour will be attributed to an external cause when external reasons are more likely or plausible. Conversely behaviour will be attributed to dispositional factor when external causes are unlikely. In an experimental demonstration of this phenomenon, Jones, Gergen and Davis (1961) asked subjects to rate the personality of a job applicant who presented himself as either having or not having the characteristics that were a prerequisite for the job. Subjects were confident about assessing the candidate's true personality only when the candidate had displayed traits that were contrary to ones related to the job requirements.

2.5.2 Covariation Principle

To describe the general process people use to explain behaviour, Harold Kelley (1967) has introduced the principle of covariation. Kelley suggests that there are many possible cause and effect relationships inherent in a situation that provides a possible explanation for a behaviour. We try to analyse these relationships in order to pinpoint a particular cause for a behavior. The covariation principle states that the cause that will be chosen to explain an effect is a cause that is present when the effect is present, and absent when the effect is also absent.

According to the covariation principle, an observer can use one of three specific types of causes to explain an effect:

The actor — the individual who is demonstrating the behaviour.

The entity— the target person or thing at which the behaviour is directed.

The circumstances- the setting under which the behavior accurse.

But how do we know which explanation would be correct? According to Kelley we consider three different kinds of information to figure out the answer.

Consensus: is the degree to which other people react similarly in the same situation.

Consistency: is the degree to which the actor behaves the same way in other situations.

Distinctiveness: refers to the extent to which the same behaviour occurs in relation to other people or stimuli.

Table: Summary information patterns for the three attributions

Attribution	Information Pattern		
	Consensus	Distinctiveness	Consistency
Object	High	High	High
Entity	Low	Low	High
Circumstances	Low	High	Low

Kelley suggests that we make attribution either to *dispositional factors* (something about the person) or the *situational factors* (something about the target person or the particular circumstances). Research concerning these predictions has largely been supportive of Kelley's theory. Moreover, even when some of the sources of information are absent, people still make causal inferences similar to the ones predicted by Kelley. On the other hand some evidence suggests that an important restriction must be placed on Kelley theory. Sillars (1982) argues that although the theory of causal attributions holds up when people are presented with concrete explicit information about consensus, distinctiveness and consistency, it does not work quite so well when people must infer the information on their own.

2.5.3 From Acts to Dispositions

Edward Goner and Keith Davies (1965) have produced an attribution theory that tells how a person's behaviour can be used to make inferences about his personality and motive behind his behaviour. The theory examines ***correspondent inferences***, observers' ideas of how closely and overt behaviour or action represents a specific underlying intention trait or dispositions. The more behaviour appears to reflect the underlying disposition, the greater the correspondence between these two factors is.

According to Jones and Davis we learn the most from behaviours of others that lead to ***non common effects***. It is assumed that any behaviour leads to some set of consequences but that the behaviour which are most helpful in forming correspondent inferences are those resulting in consequences or effects that alternative behaviorus would not have produced.

Another factor that colors the kind of attributions we make, and the confidence with which we hold them is the ***social desirability*** of an action. Generally, the greater the social desirability of an action or behaviour the more difficult it will be to draw a correspondent inference between act and disposition.

The Jones and Davis theory considers a somewhat different aspect of the attribution process than Kelley model of causal attribution. Kelley's model focuses on the general direction from which to draw an explanation — dispositional versus situational causes; Jones and Davis theory of correspondent inference provides

identification of the particular characteristics and traits that underlie behaviour when dispositional attribution is made. Kelly's theory has an important advantage that it considers behaviour over an extended period of time (consistency information) whereas Jones and Davis do not take such information into account. Thus neither theory alone is able to provide a complete account of the attribution process.

Both theories do agree that people are logical, rational processors of information a view disputed by some other theorists. These theorists state that very often people are in state of mindlessness in which they simply do not think about what they are doing. People often rely on well learned patterns of behaviour that allow them to move through their daily activities. These patterns are called scripts. These scripts are used more for mundane and commonplace activities.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Define Attribution.

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2) Howe will you use attribution to explain the causes of behaviour?

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3) What are situational and dispositional causes?

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4) Elucidate the Covariation principle

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5) How will use behaviour to understand what others are like?

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2.6 ERRORS IN ATTRIBUTION

The basic attribution processes that we have discussed have been supported in many studies. The theories underlying these studies are similar in that they all paint a picture of human beings as thoughtful and systematic processors of information. On the other hand, people are distinctiveness psychologist that Fritz Heider described is susceptible to error. We turn now to some of the most frequent pitfalls.

2.6.1 The Fundamental Attribution Error

When we see someone acting friendly toward another person, our inclination is to assume that he or she is in fact friendly and outgoing yet that person may think of himself or herself as introverted and shy and attribute his or her friendliness to something about the situation such as earlier gregarious behaviour on the part of the person the whom he or she is acting friendly.

The situation exemplifies fundamental attribution bias. It is called fundamental because of its pervasiveness; whereby people, when acting as raters of others, tend to attribute the behaviour they view as indicative of stable trait dispositions but when acing as self relaters tend to perceive their own behaviour as more affected by specifies situational influences.

Why we are apt to characterise others' behaviour as due to dispositional causes yet see our own as a reflection of the situation? Part of the explanation relates to the nature of information that is available to us. When we view that behaviour of others, the information that is most perceptually salient is that which comes from the individual; typically, the environment is static and unchanging, while the person moves about— making the person the focus of attention. In contrast to people observing their own behaviour, any change in the environment is going to be most salient, and thus they are more likely to employ environmental, situational explanations.

An alternative explanation for the fundamental attribution error stems from people's desire to interact effectively with others. According to this view, observers increase their understanding and ability to make predictions about the world by differentially attending to the situation or person, depending on whether they are rating another person or themselves. For the observer, knowing the internal dispositions of others increases predictability of another's behaviour, causing observers of others to focus on those dispositions. In contrast understanding and predictability regarding appropriate behavior for people considering their own behaviour are apt to be enhanced through attention, not to themselves, but to the environment; therefore, situational factors will be attended to more carefully.

The fundamental attribution error has important applications but sometimes it may ever affect interpersonal relations negatively.

2.6.2 Halo Effects: Assuming Consistency within a Person

The halo effect is the phenomenon in which the initial familiarity that a person has positive traits is used to infer other uniformly positive characteristics. (The converse is also true; observation of a single negative trait can be used to infer the existence of uniformly negative traits.) For example, finding that a person is friendly and

clearheaded may lead us to believe that he is also helpful and sociable. Although this may be true, it is not necessarily the case. Our assumption that good traits are found together reflects out implicit personality theory, which is people's notion of what traits are found together in an individual. The halo effect is sometimes seen in media portrayals of various prominent figures.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Explain errors in attribution.

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2) What are the fundamental attribution errors?

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3) Discuss Halo effects.

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4) What is meant by assuming consistency within a person?

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2.7 THE PERSON – POSITIVITY BIAS: LOOKING FOR THE GOOD IN OTHERS

This bias, which has been shown to apply to a wide range of situations, reflects the tendency to rate others in a predominantly positive way. Persons in experiments tend to elicit positive ratings and people tend to over attribute good outcomes to internal causes and bad outcomes to external causes. Public figures are usually evaluated positively. People have a tendency to view others positively. Why should this be the case? One Simple explanation is that a Pollyanna principle operates to color out perceptions (Marlin & sting, 1978). According to this view we enjoy being surrounded by a pleasant world and thus we hope a propensity to view people through rose colored glasses. This argument would be compelling

except that there are limitations to the person possibility bias. Not every person or social entity is rated favorably.

David sears (1982) suggests that the reason for the positivist bias is that observers develop an extra degree of positive regard for individuals who are being evaluated which they do not develop when rating groups of people, even if the groups are made up of people who as individuals are evaluated positively. For example, examination of student ratings of instructor shows that college professors receive more favourable ratings as individuals than when they are rated in groups and college professors are rated more highly than the courses they teach.

It seems that we tend to relax our evaluation standards a bit when making ratings of individual human beings, but become stricter as soon as the ratings shift away from the individual. Why should this be so? Sears suggests that this tendency is related to perceived similarity. When evaluating another person we tend to assume that he or she is similar to ourselves and we are motivated to rate him or her more positively.

2.7.1 Assumptions of Similarity

As we have indicated, people not only rate in a generally positive way but they tend to assume that others are similar to themselves. This predisposition is known as the assumed similarity bias. It is particularly pronounced when obvious features such as sex and race are similar, but can even occur when there are overt differences between rater and ratee.

This phenomenon can lead to misperception of other people's personalities if they are in fact dissimilar to that of the rater. On the other hand, the assumed similarity bias can actually lead raters to appear to make very accurate judgments if the others actually are similar not because the raters are unusually astute but simply because they are categorising the others as similar to themselves. In some cases, attribution biases can make judgments more, rather than less, accurate.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What do you understand by stating "looking for the good in others"?

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2) Discuss the person-positivity bias.

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3) How is assumption of similarity a bias?

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2.7.2 Attribution Theory and its Applicability in Education

Attribution theory (Weiner, 1980, 1992) is probably the most influential theory with implications for academic motivation. It emphasises the idea that learners are strongly motivated by the pleasant outcome of being able to feel good about themselves. It incorporates cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory in the sense that it emphasises that learners' current self-perceptions will strongly influence the ways in which they will interpret the success or failure of their current efforts and hence their future tendency to perform these same behaviours.

According to attribution theory, the *explanations* that people tend to make to explain success or failure can be analysed in terms of three sets of characteristics:

1) First, the cause of the success or failure may be *internal* or *external*. That is, we may succeed or fail because of factors that we believe have their origin within us or because of factors that originate in our environment.

2) Second, the cause of the success or failure may be either *stable* or *unstable*. If the we believe cause is stable, then the outcome is likely to be the same if we perform the same behaviour on another occasion. If it is unstable, the outcome is likely to be different on another occasion.

3) Third, the cause of the success or failure may be either *controllable* or *uncontrollable*. A controllable factor is one which we believe we ourselves can alter if we wish to do so. An uncontrollable factor is one that we do not believe we can easily alter. An *internal* factor can be controllable (we can control our effort by trying harder) or uncontrollable (most people cannot easily change their basic intellectual ability or change from being an introvert to being an extrovert). Likewise, an *external* factor can be controllable (a person failing a difficult course could succeed by taking an easier course) or uncontrollable (if calculus is difficult because it is abstract, it will still be abstract no matter what we do).

An important assumption of attribution theory is that people will interpret their environment in such a way as to maintain a positive self-image. That is, they will *attribute* their successes or failures to factors that will enable them to feel as good as possible about themselves. In general, this means that when learners succeed at an academic task, they are likely to want to attribute this success to their own efforts or abilities; but when they fail, they will want to attribute their failure to factors over which they have no control, such as bad teaching or bad luck.

The basic principle of attribution theory as it applies to motivation is that a person's own perceptions or attributions for success or failure determine the amount of effort the person will expend on that activity in the future.

There are four factors related to attribution theory that influence motivation in education: ability, task difficulty, effort, and luck. In terms of the characteristics discussed previously, these four factors can be analysed in the following way:

Ability is a relatively *internal* and *stable* factor over which the learner *does not exercise much direct control*.

Task difficulty is an *external* and *stable* factor that is *largely beyond the learner's control*.

Effort is an *internal* and *unstable* factor over which the learner *can exercise a great deal of control*.

Luck is an external and *unstable* factor over which the learner exercises *very little control*.

It is the learner's *perception* that determines how attributions will influence future effort. A learner may believe that he is a "lucky person" and for him luck would be an internal and stable characteristic over which he exercises little control. In other words, for this person "luck" is really what the preceding list calls an "ability" or personality characteristic.

Likewise, a person may believe that she expended a great deal of effort, when in fact she did not, or that an objectively easy task was difficult.

The basic principle of attribution theory as it applies to motivation is that *a person's own perceptions or attributions for success or failure determine the amount of effort the person will expend on that activity in the future.*

Students will be most persistent at academic tasks under the following circumstances:

1) If they attribute their academic *successes* to either (a) internal, unstable, factors over which they have control (e.g., effort) or (b) internal, stable, factors over which they have little control but which may sometimes be disrupted by other factors (e.g., ability disrupted by occasional bad luck);

2) If they attribute their *failures* to internal, unstable factors over which they have control (e.g., effort).

   If we want students to persist at academic tasks, we should help them establish a sincere belief that they are competent and that occasional imperfections or failures are the result of some other factor (such as bad luck or a lack of sufficient effort) that need not be present on future occasions. (That is, *ability attributions for success* are likely to be beneficial, with the exception cited in the next guideline.)

3) It is *not* beneficial for students to attribute their successes *entirely* to ability. If they think they already have all the ability they need, they may feel that additional effort is superfluous. The ideal attribution for success is, "I succeeded because I am a competent person and worked hard."

4) When students fail, they are most likely to persist and eventually succeed if they attribute their failure to *a lack of appropriate effort*. Therefore, it is extremely important that when students perceive themselves as unsuccessful

teachers help them develop the conviction that they can still succeed if they give it their best shot. (Note that it is important to define effort appropriately, as in guideline 5.)

5) It is extremely hazardous to motivational health for students to fail repeatedly after making a serious effort at academic tasks. When this happens, they will either (a) stop believing they are competent, or (b) stop attributing their failure to lack of effort. Both of these outcomes are likely to reduce persistence at the academic tasks. It is important, therefore, to arrange tasks so that students who work hard are able to perceive themselves as successful.

6) It is important to *define effort correctly* and for the learners to *internalise* an accurate concept of effort. In practical terms effort is most usefully defined as *devoting effective academic learning time to the task*. Just trying harder or spending more time doing ineffective activities does not constitute effort. It is extremely important to make this distinction. If we use another definition of effort, when we tell children that their failures are a result of a lack of effort, we run the risk of leading them to believe that they have an internal, stable characteristic called laziness, over which they have no control. This will *reduce* motivation.

7) Another way to say this is that it is possible and desirable for students to believe that even though they have "worked hard," they have not yet put forth their best effort. If we can show students ways to improve their efforts— and there are almost always ways to channel their energies more effectively - then we can enable them to have an accurate perception that increased effort is likely to pay off.

8) Excessively competitive grading and evaluation systems are likely to impair the learning of many students. Competition will encourage students to persist only to the extent that they believe additional effort will enable them to succeed within the competitive atmosphere. In many instances, success in competition is completely beyond the learner's control— no matter how hard a learner works, another more competent and equally energetic competitor is likely to win.

9) It is useful to evaluate students at least partly (but not exclusively) on the basis of their effort. This does not mean that the weakest students in a class should receive the highest grades simply because they may spend more time trying to master the subject matter. Ideally, course assignments should be arranged so that diligent work actually leads to academic success, and the teacher's evaluation should help students see this connection.

10) In general, it is best for students to believe that it is their own behaviour rather than external circumstances that leads to success or failure. Researchers refer to this as having an ***internal locus of control***. While it is good for students to have a realistic understanding of what's happening around them, research shows that the most successful students have a tendency to *over*estimate the degree to which their own behaviour leads to success or failure.

When students have a conviction that they lack ability, it is necessary to take steps to circumvent or overcome this conviction. Such students are likely to repudiate successes. For example, when they do well, they are likely to have a sincere conviction that they were "just lucky." It is difficult to alter this conviction. Changing

this conviction is tantamount to altering the learner's self-concept, and this cannot be accomplished in a short time.

The preceding guidelines should enable teachers to use attribution theory to motivate students more effectively. In addition, it is possible simply to reinforce effort attributions and to conduct training programs designed to promote attributions that are likely to lead to higher levels of motivation and productivity.

2.7.3 Additional Concepts Related to Attribution Theory

Attribution theory is an evolving field, and it is likely that further research will lead to additional practical insights regarding motivation. It is important to note that this discussion of attribution theory has barely scratched the surface. The following are some additional concepts related to attribution theory:

Learning goals are set by individuals who seek to increase their competence. People who emphasise learning goals are likely to seek challenges, if they believe the challenges will lead to greater competence; and they tend to respond to failure by increasing their effort. It is good to encourage students to set and pursue learning goals rather than performance goals.

Performance goals, on the other hand, are set by individuals who seek to gain favourable judgments or to avoid unfavourable judgments in the eyes of others. People who emphasise performance goals are likely to avoid challenges unless they are certain they can succeed, and they tend to respond to failure with feelings of learned helplessness and self-handicapping. It is often undesirable to emphasise performance goals; but schools, parents, and society often overemphasise them to the detriment of learners.

Learned helplessness refers to the expectation, based on previous experience, that one's actions cannot possibly lead to success. Performance goals are much more likely than learning goals to lead to ability rather than effort attributions and to result in feelings of learned helplessness. Encouraging students to focus primarily on learning goals is recommend, while keeping performance goals in perspective by enjoying recognition without letting it become an overriding concern. Teachers can accomplish this by focusing on learning rather than normative comparisons when reinforcing students, by modeling the use of learning goals, and by using the scaffolding strategies described in chapter 12 to teach effect goal setting and self-monitoring.

Self-handicapping occurs when learners create impediments that make good performance less likely. Examples of impediments include drug and alcohol use, refusing to practice, reporting excessive symptoms, and reducing effort. These impediments may sound just plain foolish, but they are very real and actually serve to protect the person's sense of self-competence. If the self-handicapping person does poorly, his explanation for this failure lies in the impediment. If the person does well, his success is exalted, because he overcame the impediment. Since the impediments interfere with learning, they have the overall effect of reducing motivation and performance. Self-handicapping is likely to become prominent during adolescence. Since it occurs most often among persons with an overriding concern with their competence image, this problem can best be minimised by focusing on effort attributions and by helping learners develop secure feelings of self-efficacy.

Self-handicapping may be imposed or at least supported by a learner's culture or subculture or by the atmosphere of the school. For example, adolescents may handicap themselves by reducing their effort because they feel that studying hard will be viewed as an undesirable form of competition with their peers. Likewise, African-American students may reduce their effort because they resist conforming to the norms of the oppositional culture.

Expectancy-valence models state that a person's motivation to achieve a goal depends on a combination of the value of that goal (its valence) and the person's estimation of the likelihood of success. The combination of expectancy and valence interacts with attribution theory in complex ways. For example, under certain circumstances, a high probability of success can actually reduce motivation. In most cases, a person will expend more effort when there is a moderate (rather than high or low) probability of success (Atkinson, 1964).

Self Assessment Questions

1) What are the three sets of characteristics that can help in explanation?

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2) What are the four factors related attribution theory that influence motivation in education?

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3) What are the circumstances in which students will be most persistent in academic tasks?

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4) What are the additional concepts related to attribution theory?

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5) Discuss self handicapping in terms of attribution theory.

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6) What is expectancy valence models? Give examples.

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2.8 UNDERSTANDING ONE'S OWN BEHAVIOUR

Most of us would admit that we invest the most time and cognitive energy thinking about ourselves. In this section we will discuss same processor involved in thinking and understanding wheeler social object.

2.8.1 Social Comparison: Using others to Understand Oneself

According to early theorizing by Leon Festinger (1954), there is a basic drive to evaluate one's opinions and abilities- a need for social comparison. In many cases there is objective physical evidence which can provide us with answers. For instance if I think my route from home to the center of town is shorter than the route my wife takes I can objectively determine whether my opinion is correct by using my car odometer and measuring the two routes. But suppose I want to find out how good a piano player I am, here objective means are lacking.

According to Festinger, I will probably turn to social reality to satisfy my needs for evaluating my ability. Social reality refers to understanding that is derived from how other people generally think, feel and view the world. Hence, if I turn to social reality to discern my level of performance, I, illumine how others play the piano. But who is included in an individual's social reality? It wouldn't help very much to compare myself to a very dissimilar other. I already know I don't play as well as Vladimir Horowitz. For me, the most relevant information would come from similar other people who have taken lessons for about the same amount of time, who are adults, and so forth. Thus Festinger suggests that the people with whom we compare ourselves will be similar to us.

2.8.2 Knowing Our Emotions

One important outgrowth of the notion that we evaluate our abilities and opinions by comparing them with those of others is the idea that the way we identify our emotional states might also be influenced by comparison with others. In fact, a classic experiment by Stanley Scatter and Jerome singer (1962) found evidence for this hypothesis, showing that how we label our emotional experiences may new due in large part to the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

2.8.3 Bem's Self-Perception Theory

"Individuals come to know their own attitudes, emotions and internal states by inferring them from observations of their own behaviour and circumstances in which they occur. When internal cues are weak, ambiguous, or uninterpretable, the individual is in the same position as the outside observer". (Bem, 1972)

Self-perception theory represents one of the most influential theories of how self-knowledge unfolds. Developed by social psychologist Daryl Bem self-perception theory consists of two basic claims.

a) First the theory claims that people come to know their own attitudes, beliefs, and other internal states by inferring them from their own behaviour and the circumstances under which they occur. So a student who observes that he or she constantly reads psychology books may infer an interest in psychology.

b) Second the theory claims that when internal cues are weak, the individual is in the same position as an outside observer who must rely upon the external cues of their behaviour to infer their own inner characteristics. In this case people's conclusion that they genuinely like psychology will be reinforced if there are no external incentives to explain their behaviour (e.g., grades), and they have no clear prior opinions regarding psychology. Thus people simply use their behaviour and the circumstances in which it occurs to infer their own beliefs and attitudes.

One reason why self-perception theory has been so influential stems from its simplicity as an explanation for how self-knowledge develops. That is people come to know themselves merely by observing their own behaviour. Beyond its simplicity, however, self-perception theory has been so influential because it provides an important contrast to the most famous psychological theory of how behaviour shapes self-knowledge: cognitive dissonance theory.

Cognitive dissonance theory assumes that people are motivated to maintain consistency between self beliefs and experience an unpleasant state of dissonance when they hold two inconsistent beliefs about the self. Thus the inconsistency between the thoughts "I do not like psychology" and "I constantly read about psychology" arouses dissonance, and people are motivated to reduce dissonance by changing one of those thoughts. The most direct way to resolve dissonance is to change the prior belief ("I do not like psychology") to align with the behaviour ("I spend a great deal of time learning about psychology"). That is the person can resolve dissonance by making their initial attitude more favourable (I really do like psychology) and, hence, consistent with their behaviour.

There are two differences between cognitive dissonance theory and self-perception theory. First unlike cognitive dissonance theory, self-perception theory does not assume that any motivational state (e.g., dissonance reduction) is necessary for change in self-knowledge. In fact self-perception theory only requires people's willingness to infer their own attitudes and beliefs by considering the environmental and dispositional causes for their own actions for changes in self-knowledge to occur. Second self-perception theory claims that people can use their own behaviour to infer self-knowledge when the internal cues of prior beliefs are ambiguous or weak, whereas cognitive dissonance theory assumes that people adjust self-knowledge only when the internal cues of prior beliefs are clear and conflict with their freely chosen behaviour. Taken together these two differences have led psychologists to suggest that both self-perception theory and cognitive dissonance

theory can explain the adjustment of self-knowledge under different conditions. Self-perception theory explains *the creation of new self-knowledge* following behaviour *that does not conflict with clear initial self-views* whereas cognitive dissonance explains *change in existing self-knowledge* following freely chosen behaviour *that does conflict with clear initial self-views*.

The resolution of the self-perception theory versus cognitive dissonance theory debate represents one of the greatest contributions of self-perception theory. Indeed psychology only becomes better when old theories are challenged and complemented by new theories. However the contribution of self-perception theory extends beyond cognitive dissonance theory through its ability to account for a wider variety of self-attribution phenomenon. Most notably self-perception theory can explain how people develop self-knowledge from behaviour even when there is no inconsistency between prior beliefs and behaviour.

Self Assessment Questions

1) How do you use others to understand self?

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2) Why is it important to know our own emotions?

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3) Explain Bem's Self Perception theory.

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4) Discuss Cognitive Dissonance theory in this context.

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5) Compare the self perception theory and cognitive dissonance theory.

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2.9 LET US SUM UP

We have discussed the processes by which individuals come to understand both themselves and others. We focused on overall impressions are formed and attributions are made, and how such attributions ultimately influence the behaviour of the observer. Person perception refers to the way in which individuals focus on specific traits to form an overall impression of others. Central traits serve to organise a person's impression and provide a framework for interpreting information that is subsequently learned. Additive and averaging models suggested how information is combined. Impressions are also influenced by the order of information.

Schemas are organised bodies of information which allow us to organise and interpret information. Schemas related to personality traits are called prototypes. Prototypes are general personality types developed on the basis of prior experience.

Attribution theories explain how people come to understand the reasons behind their own and other' behaviour. One of the basic issues of attribution theory is concerned with whether behaviour is due to the situation or to the disposition of the person being observed. Kelly suggested that we consider three types of information to make this determination: consensus, consistency and distinctiveness. Jones and Davis's theory of correspondence inference examines how behaviour is attributed a specific underlying intention, trait or disposition. The theory states that we learn most from uncommon effects.

Attributional theory posits that people are fairly rational and logical processors of information. But, people are prone to some systematic biases like fundamental attribution error, halo effect, person-positivity bias and assumed similarity.

Research on person perception shows that we often view ourselves as social objects in a way that is analogous to what we do when perceiving others. Weiner's theory of achievement-related attributions suggests that people explain success and failure by means of two independent dimensions: internal or external and stable or unstable causes. The factors are assumed to affect both affective reactions and expectations for future success.

2.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) What do you mean by additive and averaging models?

2) What do you mean by person perception? What is the role of schemas in person perception?

3) Write a note on covariation principle proposed by Harold Kelly.

4) "Individuals come to know their own attitudes, emotions and internal states by inferring them from observations of their own behavior and circumstances in which they occur." Explain with reference to Bem's self perception theory.

5) What are the errors in attribution that people generally make in understanding other's behaviour?

6) What are the educational implications of Weiner's attribution theory? Explain.

2.11 GLOSSARY

Central traits	:	traits that play an unusually large role in determining a general impression. Central traits serve to organise the impression and provide a framework for interpreting information that is received subsequently.
The additive model	:	we simply add together the bits of information we have about a person to form a judgment.
The averaging model	:	we divide the acquired information by the number of traits and average.
Primacy effect	:	the condition in which early information has a stronger impact than later information.
Recency effect	:	the condition when later information is given more credence than early information.
Schemas	:	organised bodies of information stored in memory. The information in a schema provides a representation of the way in which social world operates as well as allowing us to categorise and interpret new information related to the schema.
Prototypes	:	the personality types that we derive in the case of person perception are organised into schemas known as *prototypes*.
Attribution	:	an individual's understanding of the reasons behind peoples' behaviour.
Attribution theory	:	concerned with how individuals interpret events and how this relates to their thinking and behaviour.
Covariation principle	:	the cause that will be chosen to explain an effect is a cause that is present when the effect is present, and absent when the effect is also absent.
Consensus	:	the degree to which other people react similarly in the same situation.
Consistency	:	the degree to which the actor behaves the same way in other situations.
Distinctiveness	:	refers to the extent to which the same behaviour occurs in relation to other people or stimuli.
Correspondent inferences	:	observers' ideas of how closely and overt behaviour or action represents a specific underlying intention trait or dispositions. The more behaviour appears to reflect the underlying disposition, the greater the correspondence between these two factors is.

Non-common effects	:	the behaviours which are most helpful in forming correspondent inferences are those resulting in consequences or effects that alternative behaviours would not have produced.
Fundamental attribution error	:	people tend to attribute the behaviour of others to stable trait dispositions, but tend to view their own behaviour as more affected by specific situational influences.
Halo effect	:	the phenomenon in which the initial familiarity that a person has positive traits is used to infer other uniformly positive characteristics. The converse is also true; observation of a single negative trait can be used to infer the existence of uniformly negative traits.
Social reality	:	refers to understanding that is derived from how other people generally think, feel and view the world.

2.12 SUGGESTED READINGS

Baron, R. A. and Byrne, D. (1997). *Social Psychology*, 8th edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon

Feldman, R. S. (1985) *Social Psychology: Theories, Research and Applications.* McGrawHill Book Company : New York

Berkowitz, L. (1986) *A Survey of Social Psychology*. CBS Publishing: New York

UNIT 3 METHODS OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Structure

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Procedures for gathering information in any discipline are known as methods. The term methodology is used to refer to all aspects of the implementation of methods. Methodology for any discipline involves the development of procedures for making various kinds of observations which provide the building blocks for theories and generalisations. In this unit we will be dealing with the needs and aims as related to social psychology research. We will also be putting forward the methods of research in social psychology. Following this we will, be dealing with ethnography as a method in social psychology research. Finally we will impress upon the need for evaluation and how it is to be done.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

Define social psychology research

1 Describe the various characteristic features of the social psychology methodology;

l   Explain the Needs and aims of social psychological research;

l   Differentiate between common sense explanations and scientific explanations;

l   Differentiate between the theoretical and applied research;

l   Analyse Various methods used in social psychology; and

l   Explain meta analysis.

3.2 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH: NEEDS AND AIMS

As a Scientific discipline social psychology embraces following three operations:

1)   Careful collection of observation or data.

2)   Ordered integration of these observations into hypotheses and theories.

3)   Tests of adequacy of these hypothesis and theories in terms of whether they can successfully predict future observations.

Each of these steps is indispensible if social psychology is to achieve mature status as an empirical science. As a method, empiricism advocates the collection and evaluation of data. Experimentation is the main souse of empirical research. It is primarily guided by induction from observations rather than by deduction from theoretical constructs. Induction is process of reasoning in which general principle are inferred from specific cases. The experimental method is basically inductive in nature as the conclusions about populations are drawn from observations of individuals and small groups. The term '*data*' is a Latin word which means 'given'. The singular form '*datum*' refers to a single isolated fact. Since one isolated fact is of limited value in developing an understanding of the world, scientists usually deal with sets of observations described by 'data'.

How do we gain an understanding of human behaviours? There could be many ways. One might ask why people act as they do? And try to uncover their innermost thought and fantasies, read the works of great novelists and playwrights and by eminent philosophers and take part in the situation of interest. All these methods can yield valuable insight into people and social psychology has at times drawn ideas from all of them. How do we come to judge the accuracy of statements about human behaviours on the basis of these methods? For instance, consider the effect of violence in movies and television. Educators, public health authorities, broadcasters and behavioural scientists have long been concerned about their possible effects. There are two prevalent views— one group believes it harmful and states that violence in mass media increases the chances that the viewers will react aggressively. Others believe that violent scenes might be socially beneficial by draining the viewers' pent-up aggressive urges. Which of these should be taken as acceptable position on this socially significant subject? The validity of a statement is verified by relying on authorities. But the problem in this regard is, 'who is most qualified person'. Experts even disagree and we may find people on all sides; even authorities can be wrong at times.

Common sense is often relied upon to evaluate various ideas and actions. Common sense is usually based on widely shared experiences. But belief based on common sense can be wrong. Berkowitz (1986:27) has discussed an example from the

history of science, "what if you had two large balls, one a heavy bowling ball and the other same size but much lighter in weight and dropped both of them from the roof of a tall building? Common sense says that the heavier ball will reach the ground first. But in the late 16th century Stevin and Galileo demonstrated that bodies do not fall with velocities proportional to their weights."

Some other problems with common sense are events may not happen in accord to our experience and erroneous tendency to believe that we know something all along.

The other problem in understanding events and things is distorted perceptions. Our perception of events in the environment can be in error. People often look at complex and ambiguous situation with preconceptions. Experiences and certain expectations also affect our perceptions. In 1966 Robert Rosenthal published a review of some of the notable mistakes that have been made in the history of science became of erroneous perceptions. One example was from Newton's research. Sir Isaac Newton failed to see certain lines in the solar spectrum produced when a glass of prism was held in front of a beam of light evidently because his theory did not anticipated those lines. "Our assumptions define and limit what we see, i.e. we tend to see things in such way that they will fit in with our assumptions even if this involve distortion or omission" (Johnson cited in Rosenthal, 1966: 6).

There is another problem of social psychological research is replication. Validity of an abstract statement is increased if the observations on which it is based are also reported by other qualified persons. Reproducibility is the most important criterion of a science. Other investigators must be able to duplicate the observations that are taken as a support of that idea.

Self Assessment Qustions

1) What are the three operations that social psychology embraces?

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2) What are the social psychology methods through which one gains understanding of human behaviour?

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3) What is common sense based on to understand human behaviour?

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4) How do distorted perceptions affect understanding events?

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3.3 METHODS: FORMULATING THE INVESTIGATION

Every scientific investigation begins with a question. The question can be dictated by a practical problem or grow out of theoretical interest.

The difference between theoretical and applied research in not a qualitative one but rather a matter of degree (Feldman 1985: 21). Pure theoretical work in social psychology is aimed at the building of a basic body of knowledge and facts about the social world. While applied research is meant to provide immediate solutions to immediate problems. But both researches have relevance for each other.

Results of even the most applied studies are invariably used not only for them immediate applications to the problem at hand but also for their implication for theory. On the other hand, theories are able to suggest new approaches and strategies for dealing with the problems of society. But there is a difference of methods in theoretical and applied research. Theoretical studies are mostly conducted in laboratories using experiment and applied researches are based on natural field settings.

But the goal for both of them is same, "building knowledge, a concern regarding the quality of life and an interest in how knowledge of social psychology is ultimately utilised" (Feldman). While the paths to these goals may differ, depending on the orientation of a particular social psychologist, the interaction between theory and research is well recognised today. "Many psychologists working in an applied field are keenly aware of the need for close cooperation between theoretical and applied psychology. This can be accomplished in psychology…..if the theorist does not look toward applied problems with high brow aversion or with a fear of social problems, and if the applied psychologist realizes that there is nothing so practical as a good theory" (Lewin 1951: 169).

The methods can be subdivided into two groups, voz., methods of data collection and methods of analysis.

3.3.1 Methods of Data Collection

Observations, the study of documents, questionnaire, interviews, testing and experiment etc.

3.3.2 Methods of Analysis

Statistical Methods: Correlational, Factor analysis

Logical and theoretical: Constructs of typology, various means of explanations etc.

Our discussion will be limited to following methods:

ן Observational method

ן Correlation method

ן Experimental method

ן Ethnography

3.3.2.1 Observational Method

Observation is the old method of social psychology. Many writers have used different terms and categories for this method like method of systematic observation (Morgan and King), direct observation (Hilgard and Atkinson) and Feldman has included it in field study.

Observation is to simply observe the phenomena under study as it occur naturally (Hilgard and Atkinson 2003: 21)

This method plays a very important role in the collection of data on overt behaviour and the actions of individuals. The main problem involved in the application of this method include, what to observe? How to fixate the observations? How to structure observation? What should be the units of observation in social psychological research, and the definite interval of time for observation?

This method proceeds in following two stages:

Describing behaviour: This methods starts with the observation of behaviours in natural setting that is relevant for the research. The observation may be based on the questions like what do people do? Can various behaviours be classified in systematic ways? How do people differ in their behaviors?

From description to causes: The method of systematic observation tells us what do people do and how they differ in their behaviours. It may also be used to find out what caused the observed behaviours. But one should to be cautious in inferring causes from observation as

A behaviour may have many causes

The fact that an event comes before another event do not show that the first event is the cause of the latter one.

To establish likely causes of even simple behaviour, a number of observations would be required.

For more complex behaviours, establishing likely cause is much more difficult.

Thus to find out the course of a particular behaviours, we must look carefully at the result of many observations, noting the effects of a particular factor.

Observational method can be relatively informal and unstructured or it can be formal and structured. But the object in each case in the same, "to abstract information from the complex flux of social behaviours that are of potential significance to the research questions; and to record each instance of such actions over some period" (Manstead A.S. R. Semin G.R. 2001: 97).

The nature of research setting or topic dictates that observation is conducted in a relatively informal and unstructured manner with the researcher posing as a member of the group being observed. A Classical example of research employing this method is Festinger, Riecken and Schachter's (1956) study of the consequences of blatant disconfirmation of strongly held beliefs. The investigators identified a religious sect which predicted that the northern hemisphere would be destroyed by flood on a certain date. By joining that sect, members of the research team were able to observe what happened when the predicted events failed to materialise? This is called participant observation. In such observation researcher participate in the ongoing activities of the people being observed.

Formal methods of observation can be used when it is possible to record actions relevant to the research question without disturbing the occurrence of behaviour.

In non-participant observation observers record people's behaviour but do not actually participates in their activities.

The most formal type of observational methods is one in which the researcher uses a predetermined category system for scoring social behaviors. Bales' (1950) Interaction Process analysis (IPA) is a well known example. Such a system was developed to study interaction in small groups. The verbal exchanges between group members are coded in terms of 12 predetermined categories. The scores of group members can then be used to determine who the leader of the group is.

Observational methods of data collection have two main advantages over the self report methods. They can often be made without disturbing the naturally occurring behaviours. Even where people know that they are being observed, enacting behavior may be quite engrossing.

Nevertheless, there are some types of behaviours that are either impossible to observe directly (because they took place in the past) or difficult to observe directly (because they are normally enacted in private). Moreover, social psychologists are often interested in measuring people's perceptions, cognitions or evaluations, none of which can be directly assessed simply through observation. For these self-report measures or other techniques are often used.

3.3.2.2 Correlation Method

Correlation is a relationship between two (or more) variables such that systematic increase or decrease in the magnitude of one variable is accompanied by systematic increase or decrease in the magnitude of the others" (Reber & Reber, 2001: 158).

Correlational investigations try to determine, 'what is the relationship among the variables of interest to the researcher?' The question is asked, 'as something changes in amount, how do other things vary? One may ask if wealthier people were happier than those who had little money.

A Correlational study of the connection between income and happiness thus inquires whether more money is associated with greater happiness (Positive correlation), or with lower happier (a negative correlation) or does not go along with happiness (a zero correlation). The degree of relationship is assessed mathematically and is expressed as a correlation coefficient ranging from +1.00

to -1.00. A positive correlation indicates that the scores on the two variables move in the same direction; as the scores rise (or fall) on one variable, they also rise or fall on the other variable. A negative correlation indicates that the score move in opposite directions: an increase in the scores on one variable is accompanied by a decrease in scores on the other. The magnitude of the obtained correlation reflects the degree of this relationship. The plus sign indicates a positive relation and the minus sign a negative correlation. The closer a correlation value comes to positive or negative 1.00, the stronger the relationship between two variables.

One of the most important points in understanding the result of correlation research is that finding a correlation between two variables does not in any way imply that two are linked causally. It may be that one variable causes the changes in the other, but it is just as plausible that it does not. It is even possible that some third, unmeasured and previously unconsidered variable is causing both variables to increase or decrease simultaneously. We can take the example of the possible relationship between television violence and viewer aggression. Because in most cases it is difficult to control adult viewers' television viewing habits, researcher must carry out correlation studies in which the aggressive content of television programs viewed by an individual is compared with the degree of aggressive behaviour that person carries out.

Suppose the results are supportive of the hypothesis that high aggressive content is associated with high viewer aggression and that low aggressive content is associated with low viewer aggression. Drawing the conclusion that aggressive behaviour caused the aggression would be inappropriate and quite possibly inaccurate.

It follows, then that although the use of correlation techniques allow us to learn what associations exist between two variables, it does not inform us about causality.

However there are some circumstances under which we could make reasonable inferences about the causal direction (Berkowitz), but their results may be only inferences and far from conclusive. We have to turn to other methods to ascertain causal relationship. Experimental techniques are generally the preferred means of doing such research. Still, in instances in which experiments cannot be conducted, correlational method can provide valuable information. We can compare both the methods on the following attributes:

Table: Comparing Correlational and Experimental Research Methods

Attributes	Correlational Research	Experimental Research
Independent Variable	Varies Naturally	Controlled by researcher
Unambiguous causality	Yes	No
Exploratory	Often	Usually not
Random Assignment	No	Yes
Theory Testing	Often	Usually
Tests many relationships	Usually	Usually Not

Self Assessment Questions

1) What are social psychology methods for formulating investigations?

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2) What are the two divisions into which methods are subdivided?

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3) What are the methods of data collection?

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4) Discuss observational method in detail.

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5) Discuss the correlational method. What are its advantages over observational method?

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3.3.2.3 Experimental Method

Experimentation has been the dominant research method in social psychology, mainly because it is without equal as a method for testing theories that predict causal relationships between variables.

The goal of an experiment is to see what happens to a phenomenon, such as obedience, when the researcher deliberately modifies some features of the environment in which the phenomenon occurs (that is, if variable A is changed, will there be resulting changes in B). We can see the meanings of some basic concepts

of the experimental research in the table given below. We will focus our discussion on the experiments in social psychology.

Table: Terminology in Experimental Research

Experiment	*A well controlled test of hypothesis about cause and effect.*
Hypothesis	*A statement about cause and effect that can be tested*
Variable	*Something that can occur with different values and can be measured*
Independent Variable	*A variable that represents the hypothesised cause that is precisely controlled by the experimenter and independent of what the participant does*
Dependent Variable	*A variable that represents the hypothesised effect whose values ultimately depend on the value of the independent variable*
Experimental Group	*A group in which the hypothesised cause is present*
Control Group	*A group in which the hypothesised effect is present*
Statistics	*Mathematical techniques for determining the certainty with which a sample of data can be used to draw generalisations*
Measurement	*A system for assigning numbers to different values of variables*
Random Assignment	*A system for assigning participants to experimental and control groups so that each participant has as equal chance of being assigned to any group*

Source: Atkinson & Hilgard et al (2003) Introduction to Psychology 14th edition. Wadsworth Asia Pvt Ltd.

There are two basic types of experiments in social psychology laboratory and natural laboratory and natural experiments have their particular rules. The laboratory experiment is of particular interest in social psychological discussions.

Social psychologists use some variations. Two of the most common of these variations are the quasi-experiments and the true randomized experiments. These two methods differ with respect to realism of the setting in which data are collected, and the degree of control that the researcher has over that setting.

3.3.2.4 Quasi-experimental Method

Quasi-experiment is conducted in a natural, everyday life setting, over which the researcher has less than complete control. The lack of control over the setting arises from the very fact that it is an everyday life setting. Here the realism of the setting is relatively high, the control relatively low.

The true randomized experiment by contrast is one in which the researcher has complete control over key features of the setting. However, this degree of control often involves a loss of realism. It is sometimes possible to conduct a true randomized experiment in an everyday setting; this is called a field experiment.

Table: Comparison of Experiments and Quasi Experiments

Attributes	Experiments	Quasi-experiments
Representativeness of data	Low	Low
Realism of setting	Low	High
Control over setting	High	Medium

As an example we take the problem, whether exposure to violent film and television material has an impact on the subsequent behaviour of the viewer. This issue can be studied using true randomized experiments or quasi-experiments.

An example of a true experiment on this issue is the study of reported by Liebert and Baron (1972). Male and female children in two age groups were randomly allocated to one of two experimental conditions, one in which they viewed an excerpt from a violent television program and another in which they viewed an exciting athletics race. Later both groups of children were given the opportunity to hurt another child. Those who had seen the violent material were more likely to use this opportunity than were those who had seen the non-violent material. As the children had been allocated to the violent and non-violent conditions randomly, the observed difference can be attributed with confidence to the difference in type of material seen, rather than any difference in the type of children who saw the material.

An example of quasi-experimental study of the same issue is the study reported by Black and Bevan (1992) They asked people to complete a short questionnaire measure of tendency to engage in aggressive behaviour under one of the four conditions: while waiting in line outside a cinema to see a violent movie; while waiting in line to see a non-violent movie; having just seen a violent movie and having just seen a non-violent movie. The researcher found that those waiting to see the violent film had higher aggression scores than those waiting to see the non-violent film; those who had just seen the violent film scored higher than those who had just seen a non-violent film.

While this pattern of finding is consistent with the conclusion that viewing a violent movie increases the tendency to aggress, the fact that participants were not allocated at random to the different conditions of the study means that other explanations cannot be ruled out.

The strength of the experiment is its capability to draw causal inferences concerning the observed relationship between independent and dependent variables. The artificial setting is its major drawback. Major strength of the quasi- experiment is that it can be conducted under relatively natural conditions. But quasi experiment is inferior to true experiment in drawing causal conclusions.

Often the only way in which to conduct an experimental study of a social phenomenon is via a quasi-experiment. Ethical and practical considerations frequently make it impossible to allocate people randomly to different experimental conditions. For instance, to study the effects of bereavement, research participants

cannot be allocated to bereaved and non-bereaved condition. The same problem applies in many other fields of research, viz. social interventions, such as new teaching methods in schools, new ways of treating those who are suffering from physical or psychological disorders, new public information campaigns and new management techniques; people are not randomly assigned to participate or not to participate in these programs.

3.3.2.5 Experimental Designs

In an experiment, it is important that (1) the experimenter keep all theoretically irrelevant features of the experimental setting constant, manipulating just the key independent variable; and (2) that participants are allocated randomly to the different conditions of an experiment. Experimental designs are used so that the above goals are fulfilled. The first called one shot case study. Followings cook and Campbell (1979) we shall use symbol 'X' to stand for a manipulations (of the independent variable) and the symbol 'O' to stand for observations (i.e., the dependent variable). In these terms the one shot design looks like this:

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X                    O  ────────────────────▶
Time
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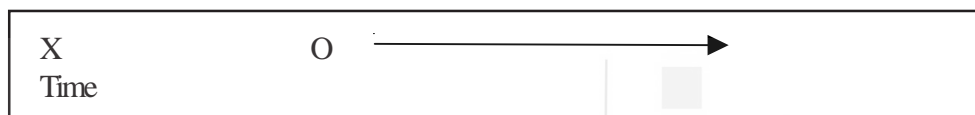
For example, an educational researcher wanted to know the effect of a new teaching method on learning. The researcher takes a class of students, introduces the new method (X), and measurers the student's comprehension of the taught material (O). There is nothing with which X is compared. One shot case study is a research design in which observations are made on a group after some event has occurred or some manipulation has been introduced. There is nothing with which these observations may be compared. So one has no way of knowing whether the event or manipulation had an effect.

A true experimental design is known as Post test only control group design. In this type of design participants are allocated randomly to one of the two groups. One group is exposed to the independent variable (experimental group) and the other is not (control group). Both groups are assessed on the independent variable and the comparison of the two groups on this measure indicates whether or not the independent variable had an effect. Let R stand for random assignment of participants to conditions, and X and O stand for manipulation and observation. The design looks like this.

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Experimental group    R            X  O₁
Control Group         R            -  O₂ ──────────────────▶
     Time
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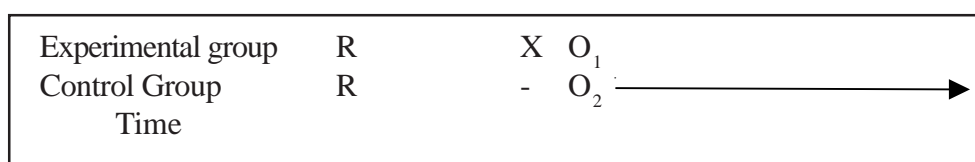
In the previous example, the researcher might compare one group of students who have been exposed to new teaching method with respect to their comprehension of the taught material. In this design participants are randomly allocated to the two conditions which ruled out the possibility that differences between O_1 and O_2 are due to the differences between the two groups of participants. If O_1 and O_2 differ markedly, it is reasonable to inter that this difference is caused by X.

There are many types of experimental designs used in social psychology, more sophisticated and complex than the above. Each design represents a more complete attempt to rule out the possibility that observed difference between conditions result from something other than the manipulation of independent variable

A common design in social psychological experiment is the factorial experiment, in which two or more independent variables are manipulated within the same study. The simplest case can be represented diagrammatically as follows, where R stands for random assignment of participants to conditions, X stands for a variable with two levels (X_1 and X_2) and Y stands for another variable with two levels (Y_1 and Y_2).

R	X_1Y_1	O_1
R	X_1Y_2	O_2
R	X_2Y_1	O_3
R	X_2Y_2	O_4
	Time	
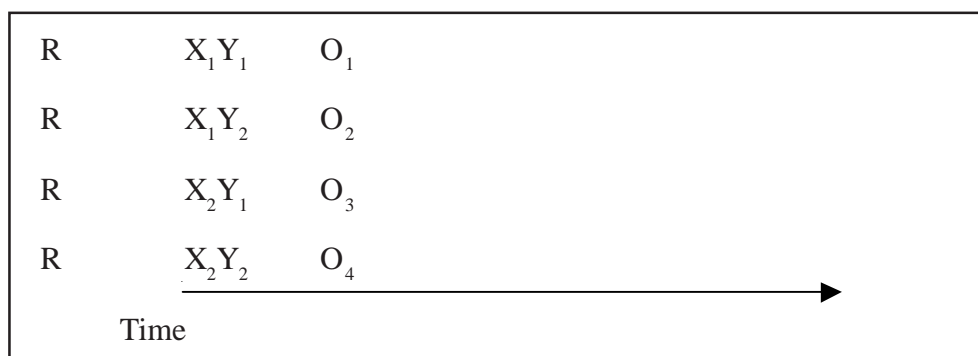
This design contains all possible combinations of the independent variables. In the design shown above, each independent variable has two levels, resulting in four conditions (2×2), which can be added further (3 × 3, 2×2×2) etc. The main benefit of a factorial design is that it allows the researcher to examine the separate and combined effects of two or more independent variables. The separate effects of each of the independent variable are known as main effects. Interaction effect is a term used when combined effects of two (or more) independent variables in a factorial experiment yield a pattern that differs from the sum of the main effects.

3.3.3 Threats to the Validity in Experimental Research

Validity refers to the extent to which a method of measurement measures what it is supposed to measure. Experimental research attempts to maximise each of three types of validity (1) Internal validity (2) Construct validity (3) External Validity. The validity of an experiment may be threatened due to the following reasons:

i) Confounding: The inference of causality is affected by confounded variables. In experimental work, it is the failure to separate two variables with the result that their effects cannot be independently ascertained. If in an experiment on memory and age all the older participants are female and all the younger are male, then sex and age are 'confounded' and the memory data cannot be properly interpreted.

ii) Social desirability is a term used to describe the fact that participants are usually keen to be seen in a positive light and may therefore be reluctant to provide honest reports of fears, anxieties, feelings of hostility or prejudice or any other quality which they think would be regarded negatively.

iii) Demand characteristics are ones in the experimental setting which convey the participant the nature of the experimenter's hypothesis. Individuals who know that they are being studied will often be curious about what the experimenter is looking at and what types of responses are expected. Participants may then attempt to provide the expected responses in order to please the experimenter. When the behavior is enacted with the intention of fulfilling the experimenter's hypothesis, it is said to be a response to the demand characteristics of the experiment.

iii) Experimenter expectancy effect – refers to the experimenter's own hypothesis or expectation about the outcome of the research. It increases the likelihood that the participants will behave in such a way as to confirm the hypothesis.

There are certain ways to minimise these effects. Some of these are:

i) *Post experimental enquiry*: A technique advocated by Orne (1962, 1969) for detecting the operation of demand characteristics. The participant is carefully interviewed after participation in an experiment. The purpose is to elicit from the participants what he or she believed to be the aim of the experiment; and the extent to which this belief affected his behaviour in the experiment.

ii) *Unobtrusive measures (also called non-reactive measure)*: Measures that the participant is not aware of; and which therefore cannot influence his or her behaviour. Social desirability effects can be reduced by these measures. The point is that the participants do not know what it is that is being measured and they will be unable to modify their behaviour.

iii) *Cover story*: a cover story is a false but supposedly plausible explanation of the purpose of an experiment. The intention is to limit the operation of demand characteristics. However, an unconvincing story can create more problems than it solves, raising doubts in the mind of the participant that otherwise may not have arisen.

iv) *Another strategy* to reduce experimenter expectancy effect is to keep the experimenter blind to the hypothesis under test or at least blind to the condition to which a given participant has been allocated.

Other possibilities to reduce experimenter expectancy effect include minimising the interaction between experimenter and participants and automating the experiment as far as possible. The goal is to reduce the opportunity for the experimenter to communicate his or her expectancies.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Define experimental method.

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2) Define each of the terminologies used in experimental method.

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3) What is Quasi-experimental method? Discuss its characteristics.

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4) Compare experimental with quasi-experimental method

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5) Discuss experimental designs with illustrations.

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6) List out the threats to the validity of experimental research.

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3.4 ETHNOGRAPHY

The word ethnography literally means writing about peoples. *Ethnos* in Greek means folk or people and *graphia* stands for writing. "Ethnography literally means 'a portrait of a people.' Ethnography is a written description of a particular culture: the customs, beliefs, and behaviour, based on information collected through fieldwork" (Marvin Harris and Orna Johnson, 2000).

"Ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture. The description may be of a small tribal group in an exotic land or a classroom in middle-class suburbia" (David M. Fetterman, 1998).

Ethnography is a qualitative research method. It has its roots in anthropology and sociology and in recent years has become a model for research in social psychology. Ethnography is a basic form of social research involving making observations, gaining data from informants, constructing hypotheses and acting upon them. The ethnographer participates actively in the research environment but does not structure it. Its approach is discovery based, the aim being to depict the activities and perspectives of actors.

"Ethnography is concerned with the experience as it is felt or undergone. To do

this, the ethnographer participates in people's daily lives for a period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions, studying documents, in other words collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which the research is concerned" (Banister et al 1994: 34). Ethnography is a multimethod form of research. Participant observation forms the base method. Interviewing and action research are later stages.

Its success as a method depends on its ability to make a reader understand 'what goes in a society or a social circumstance as well the participants.' Psychologically ethnography is very interesting in itself, in that it bears a close resemblance to the routine ways in which people make sense of their world in everyday life. But its formalised multimethod form differentiates it from everyday sense making. The multimethod approach reduces the risks that can stem from reliance on a single kind of data, allowing the researcher to compare data collected by different methods.

Present-day practitioners conduct ethnographies in organisations and communities of all kinds. Ethnographers study schooling, public health, rural and urban development, consumers and consumer goods, any human arena. While particularly suited to exploratory research, ethnography draws on a wide range of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, moving from "learning" to "testing" while research problems, perspectives and theories emerge and shift.

3.4.1 Characteristics of Ethnography

Ethnography is characterised by

l Gathering data from the range of sources, e.g. interviews, observations, conversations and documents.

l Studying behaviour in everyday contexts rather than experimental conditions.

l Using an unstructured approach to data gathering in the early stages, so that key issues can emerge gradually through analysis.

l Comprising an in-depth study of one or two situations.

3.4.2 Steps in Ethnographic Method

Steps:

1) Ethnographer starts with selection of a culture, review of the literature pertaining to the culture and identification of variables.

2) The ethnographer then goes about gaining entrance, which in turn sets the stage for *cultural immersion* of the ethnographer in the culture. It is not unusual for ethnographers to live in the culture for months or even years.

3) The middle stages of the ethnographic method involve gaining informants, using them to gain yet more informants in a chaining process, and gathering data in the form of observational transcripts and interview recordings.

4) Data analysis and theory development come at the end, though theories may emerge from cultural immersion and theory-articulation by members of the culture.

However, the ethnographic researcher strives to avoid theoretical preconceptions and instead to induce theory from the perspectives of the members of the culture and from observation.

The researcher may seek validation of induced theories by going back to members of the culture for their reaction.

Ethnographic methodologies vary and some ethnographers advocate use of structured observation schedules by which one may code observed behaviours or cultural artefacts for purposes of later statistical analysis.

3.4.3   Other Methods of Ethnography

Macro-ethnography is the study of broadly-defined cultural groupings, such as "the Indians".

Micro-ethnography is the study of narrowly-defined cultural groupings, such as "young working class women" or "members of Congress."

Emic perspective is the ethnographic research approach to the way the members of the given culture perceive their world. The emic perspective is usually the main focus of ethnography.

Etic perspective is the ethnographic research approach to the way non-members (outsiders) perceive and interpret behaviours and phenomena associated with a given culture.

Situational reduction refers to the view of ethnographers that social structures and social dynamics emerge from and may be reduced analytically to the accumulated effects of micro situational interactions (Collins, 1988). Put another way, the cosmos is best understood in microcosm.

Symbols, always a focus of ethnographic research, are any material artefact of a culture, such as art, clothing, or even technology. The ethnographer strives to understand the cultural connotations associated with symbols. Technology, for instance, may be interpreted in terms of how it relates to an implied plan to bring about a different desired state for the culture.

Cultural patterning is the observation of cultural patterns forming relationships involving two or more symbols. Ethnographic research is *holistic*, believing that symbols cannot be understood in isolation but instead are elements of a whole. One method of patterning is *conceptual mapping*, using the terms of members of the culture themselves to relate symbols across varied forms of behaviour and in varied contexts. Another method is to focus on *learning processes,* in order to understand how a culture transmits what it perceives to be important across generations. A third method is to focus on *sanctioning processes*, in order to understand which cultural elements are formally (ex., legally) prescribed or proscribed and which are informally prescribed or proscribed, and of these which are enforced through sanction and which are unenforced.

Tacit knowledge is deeply-embedded cultural beliefs which are assumed in a culture's way of perceiving the world, so much so that such knowledge is rarely or never discussed explicitly by members of the culture, but rather must be inferred by the ethnographer.

Ethnographic researchers recognise that they are part of the social world they study and that they cannot avoid having an effect on the social phenomena being studied, "...rather than engaging in futile attempts to eliminate the effects of the researcher, we should set about understanding them" (Hammersley and Atkinson).

Meta analysis

As a number of studies on a particular topics increase, researchers are confronted with a new problem: how to synthesize research findings to arrive at general conclusions. Consider work on sex differences in helping behavior. Eagly and Crowley (1986) identified no fewer than 172 separate studies that investigated male and female differences in helping behaviour. How are researchers to handle this ever increasing quantity of empirical research?

In recent years statistical techniques called meta-analysis have been developed to help researchers review and synthesize empirical findings systematically. The first step is for the researcher to find as many studies as possible on the same topic. The meta-analysis uses statistical methods to pool information from all available studies. The goal is to arrive at an overall estimate of the size of the finding. In Meta analysis, statistics are also used to test for the consistency (homogeneity) of findings across studies. When results from different studies are found to be highly consistent, researches can have much confidence in findings. When results of studies differ, meta analysis techniques direct researchers to look for other important factors.

Meta analysis is an important tool for understanding the social psychological research, and so for understanding social behavior and social cognition. As noted by Myers (1991) meta-analysis reviews can help counteract our tendency to be unduly influenced by the results of one or a few studies that are especially interesting or ingenious, since such reviews combine the findings of many studies by statistical formula.

3.4.4 Evaluation

In the preceding sections we discussed various methods and importance of the precise process of investigations. But sometimes strict adherence to scientific procedures creates problem for social psychology.

In social psychology we study the psychological characteristics of large groups and mass processes where other than pure scientific methods are required. In these methods the problem is raised by whether the information is subjective or objective.

The source of information is always man. There are certain ways by which the reliability of the information is ensured to overcome shortcomings of our methods. The reliability of information is reached through the verification the reliability of the data collecting instruments. Three characteristics of the reliability of information are ensured in every instance: validity, stability and precision.

The other problem is related to the processing of the material. "To what degree is the researcher allowed to include considerations of both logic and content theory in the interpretation of data?" (Andreyeva 1990: 57).

Thus the main task for a science to be human is to find the means through which

social context can be grasped in every concrete study. It is important to see the problem, understand that value judgments inescapably exist in investigations carried out within the framework of sciences like social psychology, and that the researcher should not avoid the problem but should consciously determine his social position.

Before the beginning of an investigation, before the choice of method is made, the basic outline of the research must be precisely defined, and the goal of the research and its premises must be thoroughly thought out.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Define and discuss ethnography as a method of social psychology research.

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2) What are the characteristic features of ethnographic method?

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3) Elucidate the steps in ethnographic method in social psychology research.

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4) Discuss the various other methods in ethnography.

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5) What is evaluation? Why is it important?

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6)   What are the methods used in evaluation of a social psychology research?

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3.5 LET US SUM UP

Procedures for gathering information in any discipline are known as methods. Validity of statements about human behaviour and events is verified by relying on authorities and common sense. But these methods can give us explanations often rejected on logical grounds. In social psychology various methods are used dictated by our problem of investigation. Methods of data collection are observations, the study of documents, questionnaire, interviews, testing and experiment etc. Methods of analysis can be statistical (correlation, Factor analysis) or logical and theoretical (viz. constructs of typology, various means of explanations). Observational method is mostly used for data collection, correlational method is an analytic method whereby the relationship between two or more variables is assessed. Experimental method is the preferred method to study cause and effect relations between the independent variable and dependent variable, ethnography is method that uses multiple methods-the purpose is to write about the behaviour of people as and when it occur and no attempts to be objective are made, the observers point of view is important in this method, and currently meta analysis is used to synthesize the findings of many researches on a topic.

Before researching on social psychological problems the basic goal and outline should be precisely worked out. The choice of method depends on nature of our problem. On the whole, researchers have to keep in mind that social reality and context should not left out of the whole exercise. The essence of the research should not be lost for the sake of scientific rigor.

3.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1)   What do you mean by an empirical science? Is social psychology an empirical science? Give two reasons.

2)   What do understand by observation method? Give its advantages and disadvantages.

3)   Write an essay on correlational method (500 words).

4)   What is an experiment? Differentiate between laboratory experiment and quasi experiment.

5)   Differentiate between correlational and experimental method.

6)   What is meta-analysis? What is the importance of meta-analysis in social psychological research?

7)   What do you mean by main effect and interactional effect in experimental method terminology?

8) Differentiate between control group and experimental group.

9) What do you mean by ethnographic research? What is the importance of ethnographic research for social psychology?

10) Write the ways in which threats to the validity of an experiment could be worked out.

3.7 GLOSSARY

Method	:	procedures for gathering information in any discipline are known as methods.
Methodology	:	refers to all aspects of the implementation of methods.
Induction	:	process of reasoning in which general principle are inferred from specific cases.
Observation	:	to observe the phenomena under study as it occur naturally.
Participant observation	:	observation in which a researcher participates in the ongoing activities of the people being observed.
Non-participant observation	:	observer records people's behaviour but do not participates in their activities.
Reactivity	:	Observers' tendency to evoke reactive behaviour on the part of those being observed.
Correlation	:	a relationship between two (or more) variables such that systematic increase or decrease in the magnitude of one variable is accompanied by systematic increase or decrease in the magnitude of the others.
Experiment	:	A well controlled test of hypothesis about cause and effect.
Ethnography	:	a written description of a particular culture (the customs, beliefs and behaviour) based on information collected through fieldwork.
Meta-Analysis	:	A method to review and synthesize empirical findings systematically.

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UNIT 4 CURRENT TRENDS IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND ETHICAL ISSUES

Structure

4.0 INTRODUCTION

From its very beginning mainstream social psychology adopted a cognitive orientation. The central concept of the discipline was attitude, recognised on early on in 1935 as indispensable for social psychology. While all social sciences use this concept, it is social psychology that clarified it, made it measureable and studied it in its own right. A second strand of concern developed under the powerful influence of Kurt Lewin: the study of small groups. Group dynamics investigated the influence of leadership styles on the productivity and cohesion of groups, identified communication patterns, compared individual judgments with group decisions and conformity. In this unit we will be dealing with the application of social psychology to different settings, and the ethical issues related to social psychology.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

l Describe the growing influence on application of social psychology to different areas;

l Analyse the growing influence of Cognitive Perspective;

l Explain Multicultural Perspective;

l Define and describe the relationship between Sociobiology and evolutionary psychology;and

l Elucidate the ethical issues in social psychological research.

4.2 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY APPLICATIONS

Social psychology as it is today with broadening it field by the research work on touching various aspects of life, viz. population psychology, health psychology, environmental psychology, legal system and psychology. It can be used to understand personal health problems as well problems our earth is facing. Social psychology has adopted multicultural perspective to understand behaviour with respect to the cultural and social context.

Dissonance and attribution theory have created the most voluminous body of experimental work. During the late 1960, it was pointed out that the mainstream social psychology had emphasised predominantly individual cognitive processes and had neglected the social context and that it had relied too exclusively on experiments in laboratory settings.

Modern Social psychology has notable features such as that it has broadened its repertoire of methods. It has become much more relevant to the understanding of everyday life with research works focused on its application in various areas. The social phenomena are explained with respect to different social and cultural settings.

The cognitive approach to the explanations which was more or less sidelined by experimental and behavioural approach is again gaining significance. New trends such as socio biology and evolutionary social psychology have broadened the realm of theoretical tools of social psychology.

Practical demands have always far surpassed the theoretical knowledge is social psychology. The 1970 and 1980 were marked by growing concerns with the application of social knowledge. "Applied social psychology is the utilisation of social psychological principles and research methods in real word settings in an effort to solve a variety of individual and societal problems" (Weyant 1986). In this section we will discuss various applications of social psychology.

4.2.1 Population Psychology

Population psychology concentrates on the effects of the rapid expansion of the number of humans on this planet and on efforts to control this expansion. How is it that the number of human beings has grown in this fashion? Sagan (1989) explains the mathematical   phenomenon in terms of the 'Secret of the Persian

Chessboard." Legend has it that the grand vizier of Persia invented the game of chess played on a board divided into sixty-four squares. The king was pleased by this new game and he told the vizier to select whatever he wished as a reward. The clever inventor pretended to be a modest man who seemed to make only a small request. He asked the king to give him a few grains of wheat-just one grain on the first square of the board, doubling it to two grain on the second square, four grains on the third, and so on for all sixty four squares. The king thought that this was a small reward, and he was relieved that so little had been requested. What was not obvious to the king, or to most of us, is that by the time the doubling continued to the sixty fourth square, the reward would add up to 18.5 quintillion grains of wheat: about 75 billion metric tons- more than the contents of all the king's granaries. This type of astonishing growth is called exponential increase.

In a similar way, when time passes arithmetically, population grows geometrically each year. The reason why exponential growth comes as a surprise is that we ordinarily think in arithmetic rather than geometric terms. Our thinking is not adapted to the percentage increments. Also, the passage of large segment of time is required for noticeable growth. Some observers argue that continued population growth is essential because it acts as an incentive, resulting in a rise in everyone's standard of living. Since continued growth of population eats away the development, an attitudinal change is required.

Social psychology is important in changing attitude and enhancing sensitivity. "To bring about change, it is obviously important for psychologists to help increase the quality and quantity of sex education, to bring about changes and reduce situational constraints either to modify dispositional variables or to modify educational messages and contraceptive availability to take account of individual differences" (Baron and Byron, 1994: 546).

4.2.2 Health Psychology

Health psychology is the specialty that studies psychological processes affecting the development, prevention and treatment of physical illnesses. A major obstacle to the prevention of many physical disorders is the reluctance of people to believe that some aspect of their lifestyle requires changing; mainly became information about possible threats to health arouses fear and anxiety, the more relevant such messages are to oneself the less one believes them.

In a study Lieberman & Chaiken (1992) women were given bogus information about medical research that found a link between caffeine and a breast disorder. The threat was either high or low. Women for whom the threat was most relevant (regular coffee drinkers) were less likely to believe either the high threat or the low threat message than were women who did not drink coffee. The study showed that how personal relevance and self-interest interact in affecting people's response to informational messages.

Psychologists have been studying the effects of stress since World War II. The questions of stress and illness, stress and coping and reduction of the harmful effects of stress have been investigated by psychologists. The most common source of stress are occupational threats, family threats, complaints from a spouse, pressure from a supervisor to work harder etc. One reason that physical illness is likely to occur doing times of stress is that the resulting worry and anxiety may interfere with such health related behaviours as eating a balanced diet or exercising.

In addition to this indirect effect the body's immune system functions less well when stress is high. This finding of a direct link between psychological responses and the body's defense against disease has led to the development of the field of psychoneuro-immunology. This interdisciplinary approach studies stress, emotional and behavioural reactions, and the immune system simultaneously. Zimmerman (1990) suggests that the term 'learned hopefulness (as contrasted with learned helplessness) be applied to individuals who know how to solve problems and who feel a sense of control.

Several other personality variables have been studied which predict possibility to develop or not develop sickness, for example neurotic individuals react more negatively to stress then those who are not neurotic and are also more likely to become ill as a result.

Health is also affected by the kind of goals for which we strive.

People also differ in their characteristic feelings of pessimism and optimism. Those with a pessimistic outlook view events uncontrollable.

Type A behaviour pattern (competitiveness, anger, an urgency about time and a workaholic life style) as a personality variable is associated with aggression. Research indicates that people identified as Type A, compared to Type B, have higher blood pressure, produce smallest amounts of HDL-good cholesterol and are twice likely to suffer from heart disease.

It appeases that the anger component is a critical factor that leads to coronary problems. Thus, working hard to achieve does not cause heart disease, but failure to achieve elicit a hostile self-schema for the Type A person. This hostility in turn is detrimental to good health.

A familiar concept in health psychology is the importance of social support-physical and psychological comfort from friends and family. The general finding is that people who interact closely with family and friends are better able to avoid illness than those who remain isolated from others, if illness does occur, those who receive social support recover more quickly. It is because there is someone with whom one can talk about unpleasant life events rather than engaging in self-concealment.

When an illness does strike, the person has to make a series of critical choices and decisions- noticing and interpreting symptoms, deciding to take action and coping with medical procedures. Thus, research in health psychology focuses on individual lifestyles and their perceptions and attitudes so that it can contribute for the better personal health just by enthusing right kind of thinking.

4.2.3 Environmental Psychology

Environmental psychology is the field that deals with interaction between physical world and human behaviour. Among the environmental factors affect behaviours are environmental stress, noise, temperature, air pollution, atmospheric electricity etc. The negative effects of human actions on environment in include global warming and the ever-mounting problem of waste. Studies designed to consol littering suggest that pro-environmental behaviour can be increased by the use of prompts, rewards and legalisations.

4.2.4 Industrial Organisational Psychology

It is an application of social psychology which focuses on understanding behaviours in work settings especially within the field of industries and organisations. Work related attitudes include employees' evaluation of jobs (job satisfaction) and of their organisations. Research has emphasised the determinants and the consequences of these attitudes.

Work motivation is influenced by cognitive factors, the outcomes of performance, and the perception of inequity.

A common problem in organisations is conflict, and psychologists have identified both organisational causes competition over scarce resources, and interpersonal causes such as stereotypes, prejudices, grudges and ineffective communication styles. Organisational conflicts can be reduced or resolved by such techniques as bargaining, super-ordinate goals and the induction of represses incompatible with anger and conflict.

4.2.5 Legal System and Social Psychology

Forensic psychology has produced ample evidence that the reality of our legal system often doesn't live up to its ideals. Witnesses and defendants are influenced by interrogation procedures and media publicity.

Eyewitness testimony is often inaccurate and the behaviours of attorneys and judges can influence verdict. Jurors respond in part on the basis of cognitive reinterpretation of the evidence and on emotional biases for and against specific defendants.

Psychologists working in this area contribute to the social order by their research human cognitive system and communication patterns.

Human cognitive system has limits and it is affected by various things. Legal procedures depend mostly on reports and evidences by eyewitness. But the fact about human memory can be revealing: its limited capacity, constructive processes all need to be paid attention to in court hearings.

Ever increasing demands of psychology in various field call for specialist help to work in these areas. As we earlier said practical demands far surpass theoretical work in social psychology. But in any ways, it is exporting its knowledge and importing various ideas from other sciences and practices.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Discuss the application of social psychology to different areas.

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2) How is social psychology applied to Population psychology?

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3) Discuss the application of social psychology to health fields.

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4) How will you apply social psychology to environmental and industraial /
organisational fields?

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5) How is social psychology concerned with legal system?

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4.3 GROWING INFLUENCE OF COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE

Cognitive factors— attitudes, beliefs, values, inferences, play a key role in social behaviour. Social psychologists have realised that our understanding of virtually all aspects of social behaviours could be greatly enhanced by attention to the cognitive processes that underlie them.

This approach involves efforts to many aspects of social thought and social behaviours, basic knowledge about such issue as (1) how memory operates, (2) What are human reasoning processes, and (3) how new information is integrated into existing mental formworks. Efforts have been made to understand the nature and impact of stereotypes in relation to certain aspects of memory (tendencies to recall only certain types of information) and aspects of social reasoning that can lead people to false conclusions about others. The results of research conducted within this perspective have been show that affect is an important determinant of many forms of social behaviors ranging from helping on the one hand, through aggression and conflict on the other. Researchers have also studied the relation between affect and cognition— how feelings shape thought and how thought shapes feelings.

4.4 MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Social psychology have always been accused of being American. It was pointed out that the predominance of experimental orientation in social psychology is deficient not due to the fact that experimentation is useless as a method but because of the fact that the possibility is lost on the level of experimental research to see the connection between the problem studied and the social context. Multicultural diversity was the need of the hour for social psychology to really be social. The questions were: can the findings of the studies (usually conducted in the U.S.) be generalised to other cultures? Are the principles of behaviours established in the U.S. universally applicable?

Many social psychologists now believe that cultural factors and forces are so powerful that they can influence even the most basic aspects of social behaviours. It is increasingly becoming clear that cultural difference are an important topic in their own right and should receive careful attention in social psychological research.

Why do persons from different cultures react in contrasting ways to various situations? The study of such issues may help clarify those aspects which are universal and those that are culturally determined.

4.5 SOCIOBIOLOGY AND EVOLUTIONARY SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Is social behaviour influenced by biological processes and by genetic factors? Many social psychologists today believe that our preferences, behaviours, emotional reactions and cognitive abilities are affected to some extent by our biological inheritance (Buss 1990, Nisbett 1990). Sociobiology a discipline that is based on the thought that many aspects of social behaviours are the result of evolutionary processes in which patterns of behaviours that contribute to reproduction are strengthened and spread throughout a population. Evolutionary social psychology suggests that social tendencies toward behaviours that are most adaptive from the point of view of survivals increase in strength over time within a given population. But it is also recognised that such tendencies change in response to environmental and social conditions. They can even be altered by cognitive processes. But some of the basic assumptions of sociobiology are questioned. Behaviours can be changed. Tendencies in social behaviours should exist because they are the result of a long evolutionary processor is also rejected.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Discuss the growing influence of cognitive perspective in social psychology.

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2) Explain social psychology from a multicultural perspective.

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3) Explain the various aspects of social psychology from a biological perspective.

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4) Explain the evolutionary perspective in social psychology.

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4.6 SOME ETHICAL ISSUES IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Untill the mid 20th century few people worried about the ethics of research with human participants. After World War II, however, the discovery of Nazi atrocities such as the dangerous and often fatal medical experiments carried out by doctors in concentration camps on unwilling prisoners come to light.

Concerns were also raised by the discovery of unethical medical experimentation in the United States such as the notorious Tuskegee case In 1932 the U.S. public Health service began a 40- year study in Tuskgee Alabama on 399 poor and semiliterate African American men who had syphilis, a progressive disease that can lead to brain damage and death. The goal was to trace the effects of syphilis on untreated males over many years. The men were told that they were being treated but in fact they were never given medication even though penicillin was available and was effective against the disease. Even as late as sixties, treatment was still being withheld from the survivors while the study continued.

4.6.1 Deception

In the field of social psychology, ethical concerns have been focused on the use of deception by researchers. It might sound inherently contradictory for a discipline that calls itself science and yet use deception as a major research tool. Why is deception so prevalent? Most researchers agree that in many cases it is necessary to disguise key elements of a study in order to avoid having subject's behaviour influenced by what they think to be a true purpose of the study. Deception may appear in following forms: (Geller 1981)

Implicit deception occurs when the actual situation is so different from what the subjects expect that they behave under incorrect assumptions. In the most extreme cases subject do not even know that they are in an experiment when in reality they are.

Technical deception occurs when the equipment and procedures of an experiment are misrepresented. This occurs when subjects are given a cover story about the purpose of the experiment but the real purpose is in fact very different.

Role deception occurs when other people in a study are misrepresented. Another subject may actually be a confederate of the experiment or the experimenter may pose os a fellow student in a classroom.

Deception raises a number of ethical dilemmas. Should people be studied without their knowledge? Should the true purpose of experiments be revealed to subjects? Should research procedures place people under stress? Should researchers induce subjects to behave in way that they otherwise would be unlikely to do? These questions have led to efforts within many professional associations to define ethical behaviours in researches. The American Psychological Association (APA) first developed guidelines for the ethical conduct of psychological research in 1972 and revised these guidelines in 1992. Three important issues in psychological research are: informed consent, debriefing and minimal risk.

4.6.2 Informed Consent

A subject must voluntarily agree to participate in research without any coercion and must understand what the participation involves. This is known on informed consent. The researcher has an obligation to tell the potential subject as much as possible about the study before asking them to participate. Subjects should be informed about the research procedures, any risks or benefits of the research, their right to refute to participate and their right to withdraw at any time during the research without penalty. Any exception to this general guideline must be approved by the institutional review board after careful examination of the planned research. But these requirements may create problems for a social psychologist. It may be important in some cases to not reveal the true purpose of the research to avoid bias into their responses. Even in simplest research subject are rarely told the specific hypotheses that are being tested. What would happen if researcher first told subjects that the study is focused on the willingness to help strangers in distress and then tested to see if the subject would help in an emergency? However participants need not be told everything that will happen but they should know that they are in a study.

4.6.3 Debriefing

At the end of their participation in a study subject should always be debriefed. Debriefing means explaining in some detail the purpose and the procedure of the research. Participants should be given an opportunity to ask questions and express their feelings. A friendly discussion between the researcher and the participant can help a subject to recover from any upset the research may have caused and to learn from their research experience. When research deals with very sensitive topics it may be important for the researcher to suggest ways in which participants can learn more about the topic. Sometimes researchers offer to send participants written information about the result of the study once the research findings have been analysed.

4.6.4 Minimal Risk

A third guideline for research is to minimise potential risks to the subjects. Minimal

risk means that the possible risks of participating in the research are no greater than ordinarily encountered in daily life. What kinds of risks can social psychological research pose? One of the most important risks is the invasion of privacy. An individual's right to privacy must be respected and valued.

The other main category of risk in social Psychology comes from stress of various kinds. Subjects must be allowed to make decisions based on adequate information. Finally the subjects should leave the study in essentially the same state of mind and body in which they entered. Social psychological research offers the joy of new discoveries about human experience. The thoughtful use of scientific methods can do much to advance our understanding of social life and social problems.

But psychological research also carries with it the responsibility to treat research participants with sensitivity and high ethical standards and to repay their valuable assistance by sharing results of the research.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What are the ethical issues in social psychology research?

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2) What are the different types of deception n one comes across in social psychology research?

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3) What is informed consent? Why is it necessary?

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4) Explain debriefing.

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4.7 LET US SUM UP

Current social psychology is characterised by the research and applications in various subjects of everyday life. From personal heath, environment to law, everything comes within its ken. Its importance is added by the fact that all the parts and problems of human life are based on human thinking and attitudes. Understanding them better will lead to a better socially managed life. Whether the behaviour is concerned with individuals, small groups or our planet, knowing the basis nature of human will give our techniques a far better ground for utilisation. Multicultural perspective, cognitive approach to the problems, sociobiology and evolutionary psychology are some of the recent trend in social psychology.

Research ethics made it mandatory to respect the individuality and privacy of the research participants. There should be no physical and mental harm to those taking part in research. All the social psychological researches should follow APA guidelines.

4.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) What do you mean by applied social psychology?

2) What are the various fields in which social psychology can be applied?

3) Discuss critically the growing influence of cognitive perspective in social psychology.

4) Discuss the biological and evolutionary perspective in social psychology?

5) Write a note on ethical issues in social psychology.

4.9 GLOSSARY

Applied social psychology : utilisation of social psychological principles and research methods in real word settings in an effort to solve a variety of individual and societal problems.

Population psychology : concentrates on the effects of the rapid expansion of the number of humans on this planet and on efforts to control this expansion.

Health psychology : the spatiality that studies psychological processes affecting the development, prevention and treatment of physical illness.

Environmental psychology : is the field that deals with interaction between physical world and human behaviour.

Industrial and organisational psychology : application of social psychology which focuses on understanding behaviours in work settings especially within the field of industries and organisations.

Sociobiology	:	the theory that many aspects of social behaviors are the result of evolutionary processes in which patterns of behaviours that contribute to reproduction are strengthened and spread throughout a population.
Evolutionary social psychology	:	social tendencies toward behaviours that are most adaptive from the point of view of survivals increase in strength over time within a given population.
Deception	:	to disguise key elements of a study in order to avoid having subject's behavior influenced by what they think to be a true purpose of the study.
Informed consent	:	A subject must voluntarily agree to participate in research without any coercion and must understand what the participation involves.
Debriefing	:	explaining in some detail the purpose and the procedure of the research at the end of study to the participants.
Minimal Risk	:	A third guideline for research is to minimise potential risks to the subjects. Minimal risk means that the possible risks of participating in the research are no greater than ordinarily encountered in daily life.

4.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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