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)

ı   The action and characteristics of others.

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

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

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

ı   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.

1.10 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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