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Introduction

Social psychology, the scientific study of the behaviour of individuals in their social and cultural setting. Although the term may be taken to include the social activity of laboratory animals or those in the wild, the emphasis here is on human social behaviour.

Once a relatively speculative, intuitive enterprise, social psychology has become an active form of empirical investigation, the volume of research literature having risen rapidly after about 1925. Social psychologists now have a substantial volume of observation data covering a range of topics; the evidence remains loosely coordinated, however, and the field is beset by many different theories and conceptual schemes.

Early impetus in research came from the United States, and much work in other countries has followed U.S. tradition, though independent research efforts are being made elsewhere in the world. Social psychology is being actively pursued in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Scandinavia,

Comment [MSA1]: Relates to what Dr. Jagani said about speaking multiple languages.

Japan, and Russia. Most social psychologists are members of university departments of [psychology](#); others are in departments of sociology or work in such applied settings as industry and government.

Comment [MSA2]: Important part of international communication; can relate to the medical care of foreign patients.

Much research in social psychology has consisted of laboratory experiments on social behaviour, but this approach has been criticized in recent years as being too stultifying, artificial, and unrealistic. Much of the conceptual background of research in social psychology derives from other fields of psychology. While learning theory and psychoanalysis were once most influential, cognitive and linguistic approaches to research have become more popular; sociological contributions also have been influential.

Social psychologists are employed, or used as consultants, in setting up the social organization of businesses and psychiatric communities; some work to reduce conflict between ethnic groups, to design mass communications (e.g., advertising), and to advise on child rearing. They have helped in the treatment of mental patients and in the rehabilitation of convicts. Fundamental research in social psychology has been brought to the attention of the public through popular books and in the periodical press.

Comment [MSA3]: Clear part of understanding the world around us and other culture groups.

Research methods

Laboratory experiments, often using volunteer students as subjects, omit many features of daily social life. Such [experiments](#) also have been criticized as being subject to bias, since the experimenters themselves may influence the results. Research workers who are concerned more with realistic settings than with rigour tend to leave the laboratory to perform field studies, as do those who come from sociological traditions. Field research, however, also can be experimental, and the effectiveness of each approach may be enhanced by the use of the methods of the other.

Many colleges and universities have a social-psychology laboratory equipped with observation rooms permitting one-way vision of subjects. Sound and video recorders and other devices record ongoing social interaction; computing equipment and other paraphernalia may be employed for specific studies.

[Social behaviour](#) is understood to be the product of innate biological factors resulting from evolution and of cultural factors that have emerged in the course of history. Early writers (e.g., William McDougall, a psychologist) emphasized instinctive roots of social behaviour. Later research and writing that tended to stress [learning](#) theory emphasized the influence of environmental factors in social behaviour. In the 1960s and '70s field

Comment [MSA4]: Research writing.:part of what I am studying.

studies of nonhuman primates (such as baboons) drew attention to a number of similarities to human social behaviour, while research in cultural anthropology has shown that many features of human social behaviour are the same regardless of the culture studied. It is coming to be a widely accepted view that human social behaviour seems to have a biological basis and to reflect the operation of evolution as in the case of patterns of emotional expression and other nonverbal communication, the structure of language, and aspects of group behaviour.

Much research has been done on socialization (the process of learning from a culture), and learning has been found to interact with innate factors. An innate capacity for language, for example, makes it possible to learn a local language. Culture consists of patterns of behaviour and ways of organizing experience; it develops over the course of history as new elements are introduced from a variety of sources, only some of which are retained. Many aspects of social behaviour can be partly accounted for in terms of their history.

Comment [MSA5]: Have to relate to the culture to actually understand people.

Social perception

In some laboratory experiments, subjects watch stills or moving pictures, listen to tape recordings, or directly observe or interact with another person. Subjects may be asked to reveal their social [perception](#) of such persons on rating scales, to give free descriptions of them, or to respond evaluatively in other ways. Although such studies can produce results that do not correspond to those in real-life settings, they can provide useful information on the perception of personality, social roles, emotions, and interpersonal attitudes or responses during ongoing social interaction.

Research has been directed to how social perception is affected by cultural stereotypes (e.g., racial [prejudice](#)), by inferences from different verbal and nonverbal cues, by the pattern of perceptual activity during social interaction, and by the general personality structure of the perceiver. The work has found practical application in the assessment of employees and of candidates for positions.

Comment [MSA6]: By understanding cultural reality as well as cultural stereotypes can allow for proper communication in a social setting.

There also has been research on the ways in which perception of objects and people is affected by social factors such as culture and group membership. It has been shown, for example, how coins, colours, and other physical cues are categorized differently by people as a result of their group membership and of the categories provided by language. Other studies have shown the effect of group pressures on perception.

Interaction processes

The different verbal and nonverbal signals used in conversation have been studied, and the functions of such factors as gaze, gesture, and tone of voice are analyzed in social-interaction studies. Social interaction is thus seen to consist of closely related sequences of nonverbal signals and verbal utterances. Gaze has been found to perform several important functions. Laboratory and field studies have examined helping behaviour, imitation, friendship formation, and social interaction in psychotherapy.

Among the theoretical models developed to describe the nature of social behaviour, the stimulus–response model (in which every social act is seen as a response to the preceding act of another individual) has been generally found helpful but incomplete. [Linguistic](#) models that view social behaviour as being governed by principles analogous to the rules of a game or specifically to the grammar of a language have also attracted adherents. Others see social behaviour as a kind of motor skill that is goal-directed and modified by feedback (or learning), while other models have been based on the theory of [games](#), which emphasizes the pursuit and exchange of rewards and has led to experiments based on laboratory games.

Comment [MSA7]: Dr. Jagani specified that patients felt more comfortable when speaking in their own language.

Small social groups

All small social groups do not function according to the same principles, and, indeed, modes of social activity vary for particular kinds of groups (e.g., for families, groups of friends, work groups, and committees).

Earlier research was concerned with whether small groups did better than individuals at various tasks (e.g., factory work), while later research has been directed more toward the study of interaction patterns among members of such groups. In the method known as [sociometry](#), members nominate others (e.g., as best friends) to yield measures of preference and rejection in groups. Others have studied the effects of democratic and authoritarian leadership in groups and have greatly extended this work in industrial settings. In research on how people respond to group norms (e.g., of morality or of behaviour), most conformity has been found to the norms of reference groups (e.g., to such groups as families or close friends that are most important for people). The emergence and functioning of informal group hierarchies, the playing of social roles (e.g., leader, follower, scapegoat), and cohesiveness (the level of attraction of members to the group) have all been extensively studied. Experiments have been done on processes of group problem solving and decision making, the social conditions that

produce the best results, and the tendency for groups to make risky decisions. Statistical field studies of industrial work groups have sought the conditions for greatest production effectiveness and job satisfaction.

Social organizations

Such organizations as businesses and armies have been studied by social surveys, statistical field studies, field experiments, and laboratory experiments on replicas of their social hierarchies and communication networks. Although they yield the most direct evidence, field experiments present difficulties, since the leaders and members of such organizations may effectively resist the intervention of experimenters. Clearly, efforts to try out democratic methods in a dictatorship are likely to be severely punished. Investigators can study the effects of role conflict resulting from conflicting demands (e.g., those from above and below) and topics such as communication patterns in social organizations. Researchers also have studied the sources of power and how it can be used and resisted. They consider the effectiveness of different organizational structures, studying variations in size, span of control, and the amount of power delegation and consultation. In factories, social psychologists study the effects of [technology](#) and the design of alternative work-flow systems. They investigate methods of bringing about organizational change (e.g., in the direction of improving the social skills of people and introducing industrial democracy).

Comment [MSA8]: Cultural set up in native countries or in subcultures of America can impact social cues. Important to understanding children.

20th-century approaches

Ways of looking at working organizations have changed considerably since 1900. Classical organization theory was criticized for its emphasis on social hierarchy, economic motivation, division of labour, and rigid and impersonal social relations. Later investigators emphasized the importance of flexibly organized groups, leadership skills, and job satisfaction based on less tangible rewards than salary alone. There has been a rather uneasy balance in the industrial social psychologist's concern with production and concern with people.

Comment [MSA9]: Trying to end stereotypes based on culture.

Personality

It is evident that there are individual differences in social behaviour; thus, people traditionally have been distinguished in terms of such personality traits as extroversion or dominance (see [personality](#)). Some personality tests are used to predict how an individual is likely to behave in laboratory discussion groups, but usually the predictive

Comment [MSA10]: Vocabulary.

efficiency is very small. Whether or not an individual becomes a leader of a group, for example, is found to depend very little on what such personality tests measure and more on his skills in handling the group task compared with the skills of others. Indeed, the same person may be a leader in some groups and a follower in others. Similar considerations apply to other aspects of social behaviour, such as conformity, persuasibility, and dependency. Although people usually perceive others as being consistent in exhibiting personality traits, the evidence indicates that each individual may behave very differently, depending on the social circumstances.

Socialization

The process by which personality is formed as the result of social influences is called socialization. Early research methods employed case studies of individuals and of individual societies (e.g., primitive tribes). Later research has made statistical comparisons of numbers of persons or of different societies; differences in child-rearing methods from one society to another, for example, have been shown to be related to the subsequent behaviour of the infants when they become adults. Such statistical approaches are limited, since they fail to discern whether both the personality of the child and the child-rearing methods used by the parents are the result of inherited factors or whether the parents are affected by the behaviour of their children.

Problems in the process of socialization that have been studied by experimental methods include the analysis of mother–child interaction in infancy; the effects of parental patterns of behaviour on the development of intelligence, moral behaviour, mental health, delinquency, self-image, and other aspects of the personality of the child; the effects of birth order (e.g., being the first-born or second-born child) on the individual; and changes of personality during adolescence. Investigators have also studied the origins and functioning of achievement motivation and other social drives (e.g., as measured with personality tests).

Several theories have stimulated research into socialization; Freudian theory led to some of the earliest studies on such activities as oral and anal behaviour (e.g., the effect of the toilet training of children on obsessional and other “anal” behaviour). Learning theory led to the study of the effects of rewards and punishments on simple social behaviour and was extended to more complex processes such as imitation and morality (e.g., the analysis of conscience).

Comment [MSA11]: vocabulary

The self

Such concepts as self-esteem, self-image, and ego-involvement have been regarded by some social psychologists as useful, while others have regarded them as superfluous.

There is a considerable amount of research on such topics as embarrassment and behaviour in front of audiences, in which self-image and self-esteem have been assessed by various self-rating methods. The origin of awareness of self has been studied in relation to the reactions of others and to the child's comparisons of himself with other children. Particular attention has been paid to the so-called identity crisis that is observed at various stages of life (e.g., in adolescence) as the person struggles to discern the social role that best fits his self-concept.

Attitudes and beliefs

Research into the origins, dynamics, and changes of attitudes and beliefs has been carried out by laboratory experiments (studying relatively minor effects), by social surveys and other statistical field studies, by psychometric studies, and occasionally by field experiments. The origins of these socially important predispositions have been sought in the study of parental attitudes, group norms, social influence and propaganda, and in various aspects of personality. The influence of personality has been studied by correlating measured attitudes with individual personality traits and by clinical studies of cognitive and motivational processes; so-called authoritarian behaviour, for example, has been found to be deeply embedded in the personality of the individual. Early research based on statistical analyses of social attitudes revealed correlations with such factors as radicalism–conservatism. Later research on consistency provided extensive laboratory evidence of consistency but little evidence of it in actual political behaviour (e.g., in attitudes on different political issues).

Research on attitude change has studied the effects of the mass media, the optimum design of persuasive messages, the effects of motivational arousal, and the role of opinion leaders (e.g., teachers and ministers). Research has been carried out into the origins, functioning, and change of particular attitudes (e.g., racial, international, political, and religious), each of which is affected by special factors. Attitudes toward racial minority groups, for example, are affected by social conditions, such as the local housing, employment, and the political situation; political attitudes are affected by social class and age; and religious attitudes and beliefs strongly reflect such factors as inner personality conflict.

Comment [MSA12]: Important for pediatricians because of the study of mental development of children.

Various specialties in social psychology

Many social psychologists are concerned with such aspects of [public opinion](#) (social survey) research as the design of standardized interviews and questionnaires. Forms of questions have been devised to compensate for errors that arise from the efforts to respond in a socially approved manner; some are designed to detect lying. Mass communications have been devised on the basis of research into persuasion. Use is also still made of Freudian symbolism and theory.

Research into the causes of [mental disorders](#) has shown the importance of social factors in the family and elsewhere. Mental patients often show deficiencies in social performance that may be the cause of other symptoms. Many social psychologists hold that social factors may also apply to such disorders as [schizophrenia](#), which also seem to have hereditary and chemical bases. There has been a corresponding growth in the use of various kinds of social therapy in [psychiatry](#) (e.g., group therapy, therapeutic communities, and social-skills training).

Considerable research has been devoted to industrial productivity, absenteeism, labour turnover, accidents, and job satisfaction. Factors that have been found to be important include the style of supervision and management, the size and composition of working groups, the technology and the work-flow systems, the span of control, and other features of the organizational structure. Research results point strongly toward the advantages of a less rigid hierarchical structure of authority, with more delegation of authority and consultation, training in supervisory skills, small and cooperative work teams, and interesting and varied work.

A major application of research in social interaction and group behaviour is in training in social skills, as in the T-groups, or sensitivity training, noted above. Role playing with video-tape playback and training in the imitation of other persons who serve as behavioral models are used in teaching people new skills. Actual training on the job has the advantage that there is no gap between the training and the work itself. All of these methods have been shown to be effective, depending on the job and the teacher. Social-skills training has been given successfully to industrial managers and supervisors, social workers and clergymen, interviewers, public speakers, mental patients, and juvenile delinquents.

A great deal of research has been done on factors underlying racial [prejudice](#), but the understanding thus obtained has not had much effect upon the social problems

Comment [MSA13]: Important to provide proper support to children who develop these mental disorders.

involved. Similarly, the causes of delinquency and crime have been extensively studied, but it is not feasible to manipulate the factors influencing crime, such as genetic factors, methods of upbringing, and inequalities of opportunity. Social psychology has made some contribution to education; sociometry is quite widely practiced as a means of grouping children, and evidence is growing about the optimum styles of teacher behaviour.

Michael Argyle

EB Editors

Additional Reading

Excellent general textbooks include EDWIN P. HOLLANDER, *Principles and Methods of Social Psychology*, 2nd ed. (1971); and ROGER W. BROWN, *Social Psychology* (1965). A comprehensive account of research is G. LINDZEY and E. ARONSON(eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 2nd ed., 5 vol. (1968–69). A useful account of theories is MARVIN E. SHAW and PHILIP R. CONSTANZA, *Theories of Social Psychology* (1970). Social psychology approached through detailed analysis of social interaction is described in MICHAEL ARGYLE, *Social Interaction* (1969). Research on social psychology in industry is described in BERNARD M. BASS, *Organizational Psychology* (1965). Social behaviour in relation to personality is dealt with in EDGAR F. BORGATTA and WILLIAM W. LAMBERT (eds.), *Handbook of Personality Theory and Research* (1968). A so-called symbolic interactionist approach is represented by GREGORY P. STONE and HARVEY A. FARBERMAN, *Social Psychology Through Symbolic Interaction* (1970); and by ERVING GOFFMAN, *Relations in Public* (1971).

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Comment [MSA14]: Dr. Jagani defined how considering cultural and racial sensitivity when caring for patients to help them feel at home and to build the trust factor with them.

[Redacted]

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