

APPLIED SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

(Introduction)

Definition:

Social psychology may be defined as the scientific field that seeks to understand the nature and causes of individual behaviour and thought in social situations. This includes, for example, behaviour and thoughts related to helping, attraction, conflict, prejudice, self-esteem, group processes and social exclusion (Baron & Byrne, 2004).

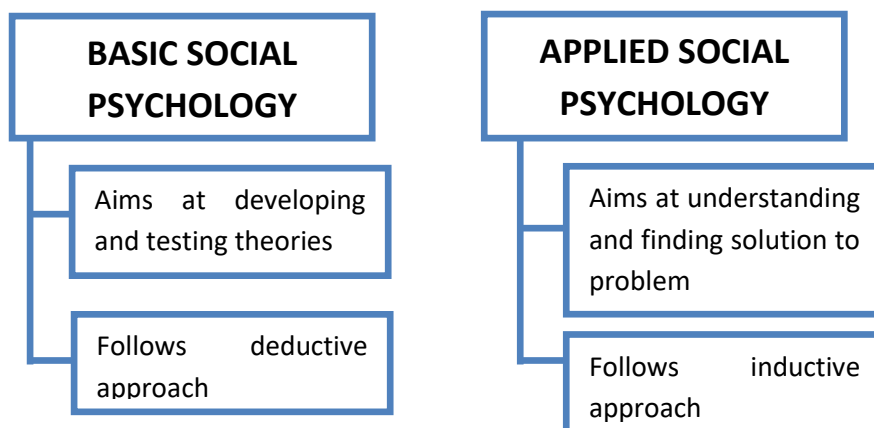
Applied social psychology refers to the branch of social psychology that draws on social psychological theories, principles, methods, and research evidence to contribute to (a) the understanding of social and practical problems, and (b) the development of intervention strategies for improving the functioning of individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and societies with respect to social and practical problems. In this definition, *functioning* is broadly viewed as encompassing how well people perform or operate with respect to any one of many criteria, including emotional and social adjustment, physical health, and performance in school, work, or athletics.

According to Schultz and Oskamp (1998), **Applied Social Psychology** may be defined as the systematic application of social psychological constructs, principles, theories, intervention techniques, research methods and research findings to understand or ameliorate social problems).

Difference between Basic and Applied Social Psychology:

Social psychologists are very interested in conducting research that will enhance our understanding of social problems. The subject matter of social psychology comprise of social interactions—thinking and feeling about others, relating to and influencing them precisely, and thus are what social psychologists focus on in their research. These interactions can be related to broader areas of social psychological concern and investigation, such as helping behavior, friendship formation, person perception, and interpersonal conflict. But in their own work do not address how that understanding can be applied.

On the other hand, it is *the concern with the development of intervention strategies* that is unique to applied social psychology and sets it apart as a branch of social psychology. Regardless of the origin of the research evidence, interventions that applied social psychologists are involved in developing will have solid scientific bases to them.



Despite these differences, **basic and applied psychologies are also similar** in some ways as both focus on developing and testing theories; use scientific method, include similar factors for predicting behavior and cognitions and both are motivated by the goals of science

Sherif's Experiment: Muzafer Sherif and his research team (1950), studied intergroup relations into the field where they studied the role of competition between groups. The researchers conducted an ingenious series of 3-week experiments with 11- and 12-year-old boys at isolated camp settings. The investigations were conducted in weeklong phases. **During Phase 1 (group formation)** the boys were divided into two groups of approximately 10 each. Each group lived in a separate cabin and, as arranged by the experimenters, engaged in a series of appealing activities that required cooperative interdependence. Members of each group soon developed a sense of “we-feeling” as their group developed a definite role structure (e.g., leaders, followers) and set of norms (e.g., expectations about how things should be done). **During Phase 2 (group conflict)** the researchers investigated conditions that resulted in negative intergroup attitudes and behavior. They implemented a series of competitions. By the end of the week, the relations between the two groups had deteriorated to a very antagonistic situation involving strongly negative stereotypes. In this examples the research on intergroup attitudes, we can see that the social psychologists focused on furthering the understanding of one or more of the following: how people think about, feel about, relate to, and influence each other. All of the research reviewed fits under social psychology's umbrella.

Sherif's (1966b) field research on intergroup relations involved a **third phase**. During this phase—**reduction of conflict** the researchers developed and evaluated an intervention strategy to improve the relations between the groups of boys. The strategy was designed in accordance with Sherif's understanding of the existing research literature on the determinants of positive attitudes and relations among groups that are divided along racial, political, and industrial lines (Sherif & Sherif, 1953). During this phase, the groups of boys were introduced to a series of superordinate goals (e.g., pulling together on a rope to start a broken-down truck that had been on its way to get food). Over the course of several days, hostile interaction between the groups declined considerably and friendships began to cross group boundaries. In Sherif's research on breaking down the barriers between the groups of boys, we have an example of the *use of social psychology to effect positive social change*. Notice how his emphasis shifted from trying to understand the causes of a social problem **intergroup antagonism** to trying to come up with a strategy for doing something about the problem. This concern with contributing to positive change brings us more fully into the area of social psychology that focuses on application—applied social psychology.

Aims of Applied Social Psychology:

1. **Social Problems:** At the very heart of applied social psychology is a regard for addressing social problems. Morawski (2000) observed that since its very early days around the turn of the 20th century, social psychology has had “an appreciation of its immediate connectedness with pulsing social conditions—crises, dysfunctions, or tensions”. Social psychologist Philip Zimbardo(2002), the president of the American Psychological Association, affirmed the central role of psychology in the solution of many of the most serious problems facing the United States. Zimbardo (2002a) discussed problems, such as AIDS, substance abuse, prejudice and discrimination, minority student dropout rates, crime and juvenile

delinquency, and “lethal hostility” (e.g., gang fighting, war). According to Zimbardo, the “solutions and prevention require changes in attitudes, values, behavior, and lifestyles”.

2. **Practical Problems:** The applicability of this field extends well beyond social problems. Applied social psychology addresses other undesirable or unsatisfactory circumstances that do not qualify as social problems in the conventional sense. These problems referred as *practical problems* to distinguish them from conventional social problems and to acknowledge their centrality to the field of applied social psychology. This take on applied social psychology is consistent with recent developments in psychology that focus more on the positive aspects of life than the negative aspects.
3. **Personal Uses:** Murphy (1998) referred to *personal uses* of social psychology, meaning how each of us can use social psychological knowledge to improve his or her own life. Also, with respect to issues in everyday life, individuals can look to social psychology for assistance. Murphy (1998) referred to *personal uses* of social psychology, meaning how each of us can use social psychological knowledge to improve his or her own life.

Applied Social Psychology as a Science:

As a branch of social psychology, applied social psychology is by definition a science, accordingly they rely on the scientific method, and are guided by the core values of science. Moreover, they likewise are motivated by the aforementioned goals of science: description, prediction, determining causality, and explanation.

A core set of values should be adopted to qualify a study as scientific in nature. Four of these values are most important (Baron & Byrne, 2004):

1. **Accuracy:** gather and evaluate information that is as carefully examined, precise, and error-free as possible. For example, researchers should develop reliable measures for their main constructs. Unreliable measures can lead to false conclusions of ‘no effect’.
2. **Objectivity:** minimize bias in obtaining and evaluating data. For example, researchers should make sure that their expectations do not affect the behaviour of subjects.
3. **Skepticism:** accept findings as accurate only to the extent that they have been verified over and over again by the data. For example, outcomes of a single study may be caused by chance. Results should be replicated in various comparable studies to rule out the possibility of results that occur by chance only.
4. **Open-mindedness:** accept evidence as valid, even if the evidence is not consistent with one’s initial, and perhaps strongly held, beliefs and theories. For example, researchers should accept evidence refuting their theory, even though they may be very keen to demonstrate the validity of their theory.

Both Social psychologists and Applied social psychologists are committed to these values. Adherence to these values guarantees that research findings are a valid reflection of the phenomenon under study.

In addition, both basic and applied psychologists respect general ethical guidelines for psychologists, as proposed in the 'Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct' by the American Psychological Association (APA) (2003).

Various general ethical standards and specific ethical responsibilities are listed, such as

- respect for people's rights and dignity,
- compliance with law,
- concern for others welfare,
- avoiding harm,
- avoiding sexual intimacies,
- maintaining confidentiality and integrity

However, Applied Social Psychologists are distinguished from other social psychologists by also having a strong interest in what may be regarded as the fifth goal of science: **Control** (Christensen, 2004; Goodwin, 2003).

In science, **control** means being able to manipulate conditions that will cause changes in a phenomenon. Thus, once scientific research has identified the causes of a phenomenon, the potential for scientific control will have been established.

Applied social psychologist responsibility does not stop with careful science based design of intervention strategies, but rather extends for both scientific and ethical reasons to the evaluation of the consequences of the interventions. The scientific obligation stems from our responsibility to test the theoretical rationales and hypotheses underlying intervention strategies. The ethical obligation stems essentially from the need to ensure not only that the intended beneficiaries of interventions gain from them, but also that they (or others) do not experience unintended negative consequences.

Another ethical implication of applied social psychology further elaborates on the idea of negative consequences. Interventions developed by applied social psychologists are value laden in that the psychologists' values play a role in determining what social and practical problems to address, including which people should be targeted for change and what should constitute change.

Historical Context of Applied Social Psychology:

The scientific foundation of applied social psychology can be traced at least as far back as the 1930s to the thinking and work of social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1936). Lewin conducted research on a variety of practical issues and social problems, such as how to get people to eat healthier diets and how interpersonal relations and productivity are affected by different supervisory styles. It is important to recognize that Lewin's goal was not only to further the scientific understanding of these topics, but also to contribute to their solutions. Very important to him was linking psychological theory to application, and the following words of Lewin (1944/1951) represent probably the most commonly cited quotation in social psychology.

"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, as it has been accomplished in physics, if the theorist does not look toward applied problems with highbrow aversion or with a fear of social problems and if the applied psychologist realizes that there is nothing so practical as a good theory".

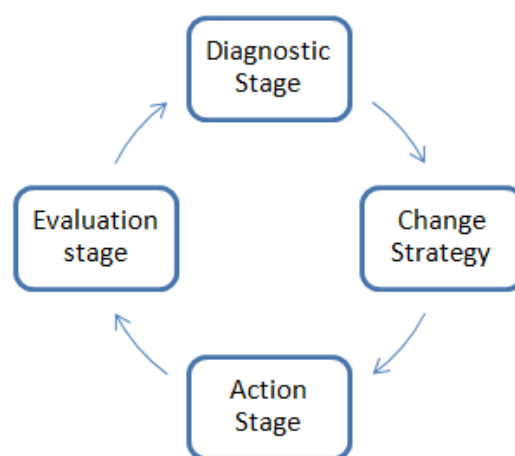
Reich (1981) observed that the foundation of applied social psychology was set by 1950 because the potential of using scientific methods to address social problems had been demonstrated

successfully, for instance, by Lewin and colleagues' (1939) work on the effects of autocratic leadership, and Sherif's (1966b) work on conflict resolution. It seemed as though an applied psychology centered in the field of social psychology was poised to take off. Yet the "takeoff" did not occur for another 20 years or so. In fact, in social psychology, there occurred a backlash to applied developments. The negative reaction emanated largely from a widespread concern that "applied" was synonymous with low quality, and thus threatened the scientific integrity of the discipline (Reich, 1981; Streufert & Suedfeld, 1982). Applied social psychology surfaced during the 1970s as a clearly identifiable field. There were several notable benchmarks, including in 1970–1971, the establishment of a journal devoted specifically to applied issues and research, the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, as well as the founding of the first doctoral program in applied social psychology at Loyola University of Chicago in 1974 (Bickman, 1981). These soon were followed by other developments that reinforced the identity of applied social psychology, including another journal (*Basic and Applied Social Psychology*) in 1980 and the first text- book in applied social psychology (Fisher's *Social Psychology: An Applied Approach*) in 1982. A lot has happened that has reinforced the initial promise of Lewin's legacy of integrating theory, research, and practice. Applied social psychology is firmly entrenched as a branch of social psychology.

Action Research Model:

The work of Kurt Lewin (1840 – 1947) marks the beginning of modern applied social psychology. Lewin best known for his Field Theory suggesting that behaviour is a function of an individual's personality and his/her environment proposed that social psychologists should engage in what he called Action Research. Lewin believed that social issues should inspire social psychological research. This research could then be used to provide solutions for social problems. Lewin's action research sought to define a social problem, recommend countermeasures, and test the effectiveness of those countermeasures through community involvement, surveys, case studies, and controlled experiments. To this end, Lewin formed several organizations to engage in action research, including the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, the Research Centre for Group Dynamics, the Commission on Community Interrelations, and the National Training Laboratories. These groups studied interracial housing, in-group loyalty, and leadership styles, establishing Lewin as one of the foremost proponents of combined applied and theoretical social psychology in the history of psychology.

Lewin (1947) developed the idea of Action Research Cycle. The action research process begins with a **diagnostic stage**, which draws on scientific laws and theory as well as on direct observations. The diagnostic stage then leads to the development of a **change strategy**, in which the intervention is planned. This stage is then followed by the **action stage**, in which the intervention is carried out and that in turn is followed by the **evaluative stage**, in which researchers and participants analyse what has happened and what more needs to be done. The identification of what more needs to be done leads on to another diagnostic stage, and so the whole cycle begins again.



The Action Cycle

Social influences on behaviour:

A core assumption of the field of applied social psychology is that the behavior of individuals is strongly influenced by the social situation or context. Both social psychological theory and research focus on understanding how and why people are influenced by social factors.

- a. Research demonstrations of the powerful influence of situations: Social situations pertain to the effect of opinions and actions of other people on our behavior and thoughts. The power of social influences has been demonstrated in many studies. In fact, some of the most classic and best-known studies in social psychology highlight the role of social influences on behavior. For example, studies by Milgram (1974) revealed that many normal, healthy people complied with an experimenter's insistent directives to administer painful shocks to a learner (who happened to be an accomplice of the experimenter, and only pretended to receive the shocks) every time the learner made a mistake on a learning task. We saw the power of social influence in the work of Sherif (1966b), where competition between groups of campers led to a marked deterioration in relations. Also Asch's Study on conformity, The Stanford prison experiment are classic demonstrations of the power of social situation.
- b. Recognizing the role of individual differences: **Individual differences** refer to characteristics or qualities of an individual (as opposed to characteristics of a situation) and include things, such as personality variables, attitudes, values, and abilities as well as demographic variables, such as gender, ethnicity, religion, and age.

Although social psychology is primarily concerned with social determinants and explanations of behavior, the field recognizes the important role of individual difference variables in understanding the behavior of people. The idea that behavior is a function of both the person and the situation was advanced by Lewin (1936): "Every psychological event depends upon the state of the person and at the same time on the environment, although their relative importance is different in different cases".

Social influences on behavior and personal influences on behavior should not be viewed as incompatible. Instead, social psychologists commonly view them as demonstrating an interactive relationship (Snyder & Ickes, 1985).

- c. Underestimating the role of situational influences: When we observe people's behavior, we explain it by making internal attributions, external attributions, or a combination of the two. **Internal (dispositional) attributions** explain behavior by focusing on factors within the person who has been observed. **External (situational) attributions** explain behavior by focusing on factors in the observed person's social environment. Despite the fact that behavior results from both personal and social influences, we have a tendency to underestimate the role of situational factors in influencing other people's behavior. This tendency for us to underestimate the influence of situational factors and focus on individual factors in explaining other people's behavior is called the **fundamental attribution error** (Ross, 1977). Because people themselves are more salient to us than their situations when we are observing them, we tend to focus on people rather than situations when explaining their conduct.

In their treatise on the history of social psychology, Ross and colleagues (2010) identify the general tendency for people to fail to recognize the extent to which situational forces control social behavior as one of four foundational contributions (“insights” or “pillars”) “that constitute cumulative lessons and continue to guide contemporary analysis, research, and application.

Applied social psychology, by focusing on effecting change in people’s social environments as a means of bringing about changes in their behavior, helps us to counteract a person’s propensity to fall victim to the fundamental attribution error, and instead helps him or her to be attentive to the importance of social influences on behavior.

- d. *Intervention strategies as social influence:* The focus of Applied social psychology is on how social psychological understanding of social influence processes can be applied to improving the lives of people. Sherif (1966b) using super ordinate goals to reduce intergroup conflict, and Hodges and colleagues (2000) providing positive safe sex discussion experiences to increase college females’ tendencies to engage in such discussions prior to having sex. Notice how each strategy involves introducing the target individuals to a social situation devised for the purpose of effecting changes in their attitudes and/or behavior. Thus, each strategy entails a social influence attempt, that is, an attempt on the part of some social agent (e.g., person, group, organization) to induce changes in behavior that will contribute to more effective functioning (e.g., more harmonious intergroup interaction, safer sex).

Levels of Analysis:

The social situation can be conceived broadly, ranging from the direct influence of specific others to the influence of more general factors. The social situational determinants of an individual’s behavior may be viewed as falling into the following categories: *interpersonal*, *group*, *organizational*, *community*, and *societal/cultural*. Based on categorizations similar to this one, in social psychology we refer to levels of analysis (or explanation) that correspond with the various categories of determinants. For example, we seek to explain a person’s behavior (e.g., studying) by investigating the effect of individuals on him or her (explanation at the interpersonal level), or by investigating the effect of groups on him or her (explanation at the group level). Of course, what is missing is the possible role of individual difference variables. In the example of studying, a dispositional explanation would suggest that your current level of diligence stems from your personality; for instance, you have (or do not have) a high drive to achieve. It is customary to combine personal determinants with situational determinants to come up with a more complete list of explanatory variables. It is also important to understand that the term level does not imply “superior” in any way all levels may be important in establishing a thorough understanding of a phenomenon, although the relative importance of explanatory levels may vary from phenomenon to phenomenon.

Methodological Approaches:

Research and practice in all areas of science are influenced by paradigms. Filstead (1979) defines paradigms as a “Set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of that world”.

Work in applied social psychology tends to adopt one of three approaches, each with its own paradigm. Which are as follows-

1. **Social Cognition Approach:** It is the traditional approach to research in which the researcher is regarded as a dispassionate chronicler of social psychological phenomena whose job is to report generalizable results in a manner that is as impartial, neutral, and objective as possible. The paradigm underlying this approach is *positivism*, which regards the researcher as separate from that being researched, and which emphasizes the reduction of bias when studying participants and topics.
2. **Engaged Research Approach:** The researcher is not regarded as a dispassionate observer neutrally reporting objective data, but is instead regarded as an active agent, enthusiastically engaging with community groups and other parties to address issues that can serve as a basis for social change. The paradigm underlying this approach is the *advocacy/participatory world view* (Creswell, 2009), in which the goal is to assist in producing change among marginalized people.
3. **Critical Approach:** It emphasizes power and liberation from oppression. The paradigm underlying this approach is *critical theory* which focuses on how the distribution of power shapes the way people construct their experiences. Similar in some ways to the engaged research approach, a fundamental goal of the critical approach is emancipation from oppression and the production of a more egalitarian society (Ponterotto, 2005).

The Need for a Broad Approach:

Applied social psychology can be relevant to addressing social and practical problems in virtually *all areas of life*. It is clear to us that applied social psychology will be more effective in achieving its potential to the extent that the field embraces the value of taking a broad approach to the solution of problems. Here we underscore three interrelated aspects of such a broad approach: **the use of multiple research methods, the emphasis on collaboration in research and application with representatives of other disciplines, and the recognition of the potential contributions of other relevant perspectives.**

- ✓ In order to optimally understand and address social and practical problems in diverse groups, organizations, and communities, applied social psychologists must have the expertise and readiness to draw on research strategies and analytical procedures that are particularly suitable for dealing with the relevant problem(s), including those that are more common to allied disciplines.
- ✓ With respect to addressing social and practical problems, applied social psychologists limit their effectiveness if they fail to draw on the knowledge and expertise of representatives of other fields. Not only must we be informed about the research contributions and knowledge bases of other disciplines, we must increasingly pursue cross-disciplinary collaboration in research and practice.
- ✓ Although social psychologists devote primary attention to the role of the social context/situational factors in understanding and explaining the complexities of human social behavior, we appreciate that a richer and more thorough understanding of many aspects of social behavior must also take into account other relevant perspectives. We noted earlier that individual difference variables (e.g., personality) have a substantial influence on how people think, feel, and behave in a social context. The evolutionary perspective, which focuses on inherited tendencies to respond to the social environment in ways that enabled our ancestors to survive and reproduce, has been used to explain a diverse array of social

behaviors and attitudes, including genetic influences on interpersonal attraction, job satisfaction, and aggression.

Various Roles of Applied Social Psychologists:

Applied social psychologists may assume many different roles. For example, Sadava (1997) listed several roles, including planner, organizer, evaluator, consultant, advocate, and activist. Fisher (1982) grouped many of these roles into two major categories: applied scientist and professional practitioner. Drawing on the thinking of both Sadava and Fisher, we see at least seven major roles for applied social psychologists, which are as follows:

1. **Researcher:** Applied social psychologists conduct researches on social and practical issues and apply the findings for resolving problems. They do so in different ways. Applied social psychologists study the antecedents of behavior that causes social problems. They also evaluate the effects of intervention on behavior, cognitions, social problems and individual quality of life.
2. **Program Designer:** The applied social psychologists are also involved in developing or improving interventions designed to find solutions for social and practical problems.
3. **Evaluation Researcher:** As an evaluation researcher, the applied social psychologist applies the research methods of social science to evaluate the process and outcomes of interventions such as social programs and policies.
4. **Consultant:** As a consultant, applied social psychologists assist individual, organizations, groups or communities to resolve particular problems they are facing. They are concerned with training and development, managing, coaching, public relations, marketing and communication.
5. **Action Researcher:** As an action researcher, the applied social psychologist actively participates in a change situation while simultaneously conducting research. Larger organizations or institutions also take help of action researcher, guided by professional researchers, to improve their strategies, practices and knowledge of the environments within which they practice. They work with others to propose a new course of action to help their community improve its work practices. Thus, as an action researcher, the applied social psychologist works closely with an organization or a community group to resolve a particular problem.
6. **Advocate:** As an advocate, the applied social psychologist functions within the political domain. According to Fisher (1982), "The advocate uses his/her expertise to press for social change, usually in collaboration with a specific group, lobby, or institution that is working to change some aspect of the socio-political system.
7. **Policy Advisor:** Applied social psychologists also take active part in policy making by public and governmental agencies or business or civic organizations. As a policy advisor, they advise policy makers on ways to change behavior and cognitions to solve social problems. They also assist agencies and organizations in designing intervention programs.

Applied Social Psychology in India:

There was hardly any mention of social psychology in textbooks before 1950. Applied Social Psychology was first mentioned in the textbook by Krech & Crutchfield in 1948 with a subheading "applied social psychology". Handbook of Social Psychology by Lindzey (1954) had one chapter on applied social psychology. Post World War II, interest in applied social psychology started increasing.

In India, there were two surveys (sponsored by the ICSSR); one till 1970 (edited by Mitra, 1972) and the other till 1976 (edited by Pareek (1980-1981)). These surveys reflect the nature of work done by Indian scholars in the field of applied social psychology. In India, social psychology is sometimes characterized as *Questionnaire Psychology* (Sinha, 1981). Contribution of psychologists in India in analyzing rural problems is noteworthy (Jahoda, 1980). In India, applied social psychologists focus on issues such as motivational dimensions of rural development, population control, communication and diffusion of innovations related to agriculture, family, law, health, poverty, prejudice, problems of identity and violence etc.

1. **Challenges and Possibilities:** In India, responses to social problems have been diverse. On one extreme, scholars think that psychology plays a vital role in almost all areas of change and management. For example, psychology plays a crucial role in policy formulation, its implementation and its evaluation. On the other extreme, scholars think that the main concern of psychology is to understand and explain behavioral phenomena. They try to analyze the problem from purely academic perspective.
2. **Emerging Themes:**
 - ✚ **Need for Indigenization:** Realization of the limits of western theories and models is very important for understanding and interpreting Indian social reality. Since some social behaviors are culture specific, Western concepts have limited value in understanding and interpreting our reality (Misra, 1987; Mogaddam, 1987; Tripathi, 1988). Therefore, social psychology should rely on the constructs which are relevant to the societal and cultural context. This shows that it is important to redefine variables and adopt culturally relevant terms.
 - ✚ **Multidisciplinary Approach to the Study of Social Change:** Developing countries often face issues of regulating social change. Poverty and deprivation are individual as well as group level phenomena. Their manifestations are related to social reality. Both the individual and systemic levels are involved. A comprehensive analysis of the problem would be possible only if social scientists communicate with each other and accept the contributions of each other.
 - ✚ **Toward a Policy Oriented Research:** According to Sinha (1988), psychologists have to operationalize the indicators of development and demonstrate how the goals of development can be realized by modifying or introducing new systems; applying psychological principles of resource allocation and utilization and lastly implementing the schemes through individuals' participation. This requires action research; confronting the interests and helping out individuals to claim the resources they deserve.
3. **Need for Reorienting Social Psychology:** Social psychology should also focus on the socio- economic transformation occurring in the society. Contemporary social psychology is not suitable for dealing with macro- level variables as it focuses much on the individual

(Sinha, 1985). The studies tend to pay little attention to the changes across different time periods. Thus, rather than using experimental method and self-report measures, researchers must use quasi experimental designs and unobtrusive measures.

According to Fisher (1982), applied social psychology aims at understanding human behavior as a complex multi-determined process and seeks to ameliorate social problems through the application of theories, research methods, and practice skills. He has laid down the main concerns of applied social psychology to interdisciplinary collaboration, continuous integration of theory research and practice, application of a variety of research methods, commitment to continuous professional development and role versatility etc. (Fisher, 1987). This requires the researchers to go beyond the boundaries of theoretical assumptions and methodological framework.

Participatory Action Research

Action research was developed and advocated for use in psychology by Kurt Lewin (1946). Lewin argued that when psychologists seek to facilitate social change, they must conduct “comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action” (p. 35). In Lewin’s view, change can occur only if an iterative process of research is followed. As Figure 12.2 indicates, this process begins with an idea (for social change); then involves planning that includes appropriate “fact finding,” execution of the plan (i.e., action), and evaluation of the effectiveness of the action taken (usually involving more fact finding), followed by another cycle of planning, action, and evaluation; and so forth.

Participatory research evolved in Latin America and other parts of the “Two-Thirds World”— Asia, Africa, and Central and South America—from roots quite separate from action research traditions (Park, 1999). (The term Two-Thirds World is used by activists to illustrate that the so-called First World is only a small proportion of the world’s countries and peoples.) Paulo Freire (1970) is often given credit for beginning this research tradition through his popular education process. Freire dedicated his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (translated from the original Spanish) “to the oppressed, and to those who suffer with them and fight at their side” (p. 7). It was Freire’s view that “authentic education” was truly working with an oppressed group rather than providing information for or about the group. Freire put this perspective into action with peasants in Brazil who learned to read as they also learned about their own culture, heritage, and status within Brazilian society. He facilitated social action based on people’s own discovery of their social position and their solutions for change. He suggested that many social and political change efforts had been unsuccessful because they were designed based on the perspectives of the educators and politicians rather than on the perspectives of the people for whom the plans had been developed.

Participatory research involves a very different level of involvement. A study can be said to be participatory when it requires the involvement of people from the group or community of interest in some or all of the stages of research. Maguire (1987) suggested that “participatory research combines three activities: investigation, education, and action” (p. 29). The investigation part of the process is a “social” investigation “involving participation of oppressed and ordinary people in problem posing and solving” (p. 29) and is not an academic library exercise (although no one says that you should not also make yourself aware of any previous research or theory about the

problem). Both the participants in the study and the researchers are educated in the process about the possible causes of the problem “through collective discussion and interaction” (p. 29). Finally, both the researchers and the participants “join in solidarity to take collective action, both short and long term” (p. 29, emphasis added). The reasoning is clear. The people who are going to be affected by change efforts should be involved in directing that change, and mutual education will be necessary for that to occur.