CURRENT TRENDS IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Preliminary Report, submitted to Unesco by the International Union of Scientific Psychology for study by other international organizations and experts in the social sciences.

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INTRODUCTION

In August 1952 a conference was held in Paris between some members of the International Union of Scientific Psychology, who were especially interested in social psychology, and representatives of Unesco. During this conference information was exchanged regarding the development and present status of social psychology in various countries, plans were drawn up for further research, and attention was given to problems of publication.

One of the items discussed was a request from Unesco to the I.U.S.P., asking for a report on current trends in social psychology, and also containing recommendations regarding the co-operation between Unesco and the I.U.S.P. in the field of social psychology. The conference decided, that I.U.S.P. should assume responsibility for such a report, and the task of preparing it was provisionally delegated to the present writer. No definite appointment could be made, however, since the Paris conference could not be considered to constitute an official representation of the I.U.S.P., and the definite choice of the reporter could be made only by the Executive Committee of the I.U.S.P. This choice was made eventually according to the recommendations of the Paris conference. Owing to various circumstances however, considerable delay was involved in reaching this decision and transmitting it to the present writer. This was one reason why the deadline of 1 March 1953, originally set by Unesco, could not be met. Further delay was caused by a prolonged illness contracted by the writer during the winter of 1953.
1. Obtaining the information

In order to obtain the required information, it obviously was necessary to enlist the co-operation of as many social psychologists as could be persuaded of the importance of the task in hand. Since there were no funds available either for calling a conference or for a personal visit to even the outstanding research centres, this request for co-operation could only be made by letter. Accordingly a personal letter was sent out to approximately 70 social psychologists all over the world. Dr. Langfeld, Executive Secretary of the I.U.S.P., kindly provided a list of social psychologists in the United States of America. Since these constitute by far the majority of the workers in this field, Dr. Langfeld's help was of extreme importance for the success of the undertaking.

The letter asked for information on the following points:

1. actual research carried out by the respondent;
2. the respondent's opinion concerning the most important trends in present day social psychology;
3. lacunae in previous and current research;
4. limitations of previous research;
5. which branches of social psychology most urgently need development;
6. the possible contributions of social psychology to the aims of Unesco.

Responses were obtained from 44 social psychologists. Apart from this letter, the present writer had a number of discussions on the topics mentioned with colleagues from several countries whom he met during the winter. The information thus obtained is also included.

For a list of social psychologists who have been helping to provide the material for this report, see Appendix A.

2. The analysis of the material

Only the slightest of attempts has been made at a quantitative analysis of the material. In fact, no more than a few percentages have been calculated, which can be found in Appendix B. The present writer did not feel the data would permit any more refined quantitative analysis. There are several reasons for this.

In the first place our informants cannot be considered a representative sample of the students of social psychology. In particular the younger generation is heavily under represented. Our enquiry was addressed chiefly to those who have already proved their merit in this field, and are - for the greater part - leaders of training and research centres. These of course in general belong to an older age group. Furthermore, not even from all persons belonging to this restricted group were answers obtained.

It follows, that our material contains a number of opinions actually held by social psychologists, but offers no valid clues as to the distribution of these or similar opinions among all social psychologists. Therefore, the few percentages offered in Appendix B must be considered more as a basis and justification for the distinctions made in our discussion of the material than as an indication of the climate of opinion in present-day social psychology.
Even so, great caution must be urged in interpreting these percentages. We have at our disposal only the replies to the letter we sent out. But from the fact, that a respondent did not express a certain opinion, it does not follow that he would not agree with others who did. In brief, there is little actual unanimity, but perhaps far greater potential unanimity among our respondents.

The method employed in obtaining the material - there being no possibility to use more elaborate and detailed techniques - permits us to draw some conclusions as to the presence of certain opinion, but not as to their absence. It is hoped, that in later more exhaustive studies, there will be more opportunities than in this one to reach quantifiable results. The present writer is inclined to believe, that on the basis of the material thus far assembled a questionnaire could be constructed for this purpose, which then could be sent out to a far larger number of social psychologists than participated in our present enquiry.

So this report contains chiefly a more or less systematic discussion of the opinions expressed by our respondents. But since it is supposed to be a preliminary survey only, even in its present form it possibly may have some use as a very broad outline of some of the important trends in current socio-psychological research.

3. **Social psychology: a tentative definition**

The field of research, which goes under the name of social psychology, is very large and very difficult to delimit. Any decision as to whether a given study dealing with human or animal behaviour does or does not belong to social psychology is bound to be more or less arbitrary. At the same time, any evaluation or even presentation of current research will be influenced by an underlying conception of what social psychology is or ought to be.

For this reason the present writer will briefly state his own opinion on this question.

All social sciences deal with behaviour - taken in the largest sense, so as to include also acts, like thinking, feeling etc., which do not necessarily have a counterpart in overt, motor behaviour. Human behaviour - in this report we will not take into consideration studies in animal behaviour - always takes place within a social setting. There are several separate disciplines studying specific aspects of this social setting - for example, economics, sociology, science of law, of politics etc. They are not dealing with individuals, but with the social structure in which an individual finds himself, and which he has to take into account in his behaviour.

Social psychology, on the other hand, has to do with the actual behaviour of people within their social setting. If we accept this definition, social psychology can be distinguished from the other social sciences as well as from other psychological disciplines, for example, from general psychology (the study of the conditions or potentialities for behaviour, i.e. of the functions and structures present in any given individual; perception, speech, thought, emotion and the like, most of them the subject of special subdivisions of general psychology); from developmental psychology (the study of the changes of these potentialities throughout the individual's life); from differential psychology (the study of the specific psychological features characteristic of certain categories of persons); etc.
Social psychology is essentially a unifying, integrative discipline, transcending the diversity of the other social sciences, mirroring the concrete unity of actual behaviour. Epistemologically, it presupposes the other social sciences and the whole of psychology. For its own development therefore it is dependent partly upon the results of these other sciences. But it occupies a central and strategically vital position; as soon as the findings of any other social science demand application, they automatically come under the jurisdiction of social psychology. For social psychology is the basic social science, on which all other sciences must rely in so far as they are forced to do, when they try to apply their findings to concrete social situations. For application of results in social science means: modification of human behaviour in a certain direction by means of human interaction. Such a modification cannot be accomplished successfully unless one has insight into the laws governing the actual behaviour of people in a social setting. Therefore, social psychology plays a major rôle whenever social science becomes applied social science.

These few remarks must suffice to indicate the conception of social psychology underlying this report. Now we shall proceed to a review of current research.

4. Current research

The variety of studies carried out at present is very large indeed. Although nearly every respondent to our questions mentions several research projects completed or actually in progress now, there is practically no overlapping as to content. In a later paragraph we shall discuss the question, whether this variety is in itself a desirable phenomenon; now it is mentioned only because of the practical problem it poses when one wishes to introduce some order into an apparent chaos of diverging lines of research, on every conceivable topic, with different methods and leading to non-comparable results.

In the present writer's opinion it would be useless simply to copy here the answers received to our question (1). This would only mean that somebody else would have to try and make digestible the unwieldy mass of data available. Furthermore, the answers differ in length and exactness; sometimes they have to be inferred from answers to other questions or the whole context of the letter; and sometimes books or articles were sent in reply to question (1); these obviously could not be copied here, but would in any cases have to be interpreted and classified. So an attempt will be made to summarize and categorize the available information on current research. For the distribution of the material over the categories used, see Table 1. (Appendix B).

We shall base ourselves upon the previously given definition of social psychology as the study of the actual behaviour of people in their social setting. This social setting is extremely complex, at least in present-day industrial society. Since the beginning of social psychology, there have been numerous studies of relatively fixed modes of behaviour in relation to certain aspects of the social setting. Most of these studies, it is true, were not based on direct observation of the behaviour in question, but on verbal statements in response to specific questions. These statements however are usually considered to furnish reliable indication of underlying attitudes, which in turn are thought to be closely interwoven with actual behaviour.
The study of attitudes is still one of the main interests of social psychologists. Now obviously there are a number of different problems connected with these attitudes. Some of these will be briefly reviewed here.

Several studies are mainly directed towards discovering what attitudes exist in a given category of the population. The following examples might be mentioned:

- attitudes in various age-groups pertaining to inter-group relations, prejudice, ethnocentrism, political ideology, authoritarianism;
- discriminatory attitudes and practices in higher education;
- attitudes in Western Europe towards political, ideological, economical problems;
- attitudes in industry;
- attitudes of youth concerning the future.

Clearly such attitudes are a result of a prolonged interaction of an individual and social environment. Quite understandably therefore much attention is given to the problem of the development of attitudes and the factors influencing such a development.

Examples:

- children's social and political outlook in relation to personality structure and family background;
- influence of harsh discipline in the family upon authoritarianism;
- origin of ethnocentric attitudes;
- studies in charge of prejudice;
- formation of attitudes common to large groups;
- changes in behaviour of education as result of training programme;
- inter-group contacts in relation to inter-group attitudes.

As can be inferred from these examples, the concept of change is implied in that of development. Changes can take place in different directions. If one wishes to distinguish between desirable and undesirable direction, a judgment of value is involved. It can be maintained, that nearly all social psychologists base their work implicitly or explicitly on such judgments of value. There is practically general consensus about the desirability of changes away from prejudice, ethnocentrism, aggressivity, authoritarianism, war, and towards objectivity, internationalism, co-operation, democracy, peace.

Much of the research on attitudes stems from the conviction, that a number of the prevailing attitudes are unsound, unhealthy and even dangerous, and that social psychology should do its utmost to bring about a more satisfactory state of affairs. This serious concern about the problems of society, this sense of urgency regarding the grave dangers humanity is confronted with persuades nearly all current studies of the type mentioned. This means that social psychology,
as typified in the majority of its students, is not a neutral discipline, but is striving to make useful contributions to the welfare of society. At the same time however most social psychologists realize, that effective changes can be brought about only when there is sufficient insight into the mechanics of processes, and that this insight can only be obtained by objective and unbiased study of the relevant phenomena. So far, there seems to be fairly general agreement. Opinions begin to differ, however, when it comes to the question which phenomena are relevant.

Here we can distinguish several schools of thought. There is an important movement, inspired by psychoanalysis, which stresses the influence of childhood experience on the development of attitudes and on social adjustment in general. The present social activities and opinions of a person are thought to be largely a manifestation of patterns set up in the past. This approach to social psychology has several characteristic features.

In the first place, the emphasis is upon the origin and development of social behaviour: it may be termed a genetic social psychology. Throughout, the leading point of view is that the actual behaviour can be properly understood only when considered against the background of an individual's life history. Secondly, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, social acts are seen as the expression of certain deep-lying tendencies, strivings, wishes, impulses etc. This means that they cannot be studied in isolation, but must be placed within the framework of a theory of personality. The prevailing type of personality theory adhered to by representatives of this approach bears the stamp of psychoanalysis.

Thirdly, the methods employed are usually a combination of those of clinical psychology and attitude survey. The use of clinical - psychodiagnostic - methods stems from the interest in personality. Since, however, these methods are as a rule very time-consuming, they do not lend themselves readily for use in field studies. On the basis of clinical findings therefore special interview questionnaires are constructed, by means of which quick and reliable information regarding the respondent's personality is hoped to be obtained.

Furthermore, a rather direct connexion is thought to exist between personality and preference for one or the other of the systems of political organization prevalent in the Western world today. In general, the studies originating from this approach reflect a serious concern with current social policy and practice. What has been said before about the non-neutrality of social psychology applies to a very high degree to this school. Its adherents come out strongly in favour of a democratic way of life and of humanitarian values.

While ethical values thus provide the axiological centre of interest for this approach to social psychology, there is another trend which focuses on a different set of values. These include efficiency, morale and the like and will for convenience's sake be lumped together under the concept of productivity. The concern with productivity is very wide-spread, and the studies related to it cannot be said to be particular to any one school. In fact, productivity is a topic dealt with in nearly all the main psychological schools at present, each in its own way. Nevertheless, some generalizations seem appropriate.
Firstly, productivity as a rule is studied within a given organizational setting. This may be a factory or other commercial enterprise, a labour union, a youth club, an army service, a school etc. In most cases an attempt is made to discover the relationships between certain features of the organization and productivity.

Secondly, on the whole no general theory of personality is either brought to bear on, or constructed on the basis of, the findings of these studies. The interest usually is limited to certain personality characteristics only (for example, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, background, age). Often far more attention is given to functional or positional characteristics (task, role, status, authority, power etc.)

Thirdly, a genetic approach is very seldom attempted. In fact, the behaviour studied is mostly seen in relation with certain aspects of the present situation rather than with the past history of any of the people concerned. Of course, this is quite in line with the comparative absence of interest in personality theory.

The situational approach and the limited interest in personality can be readily understood if the organizational setting of these studies is taken into account. An organizational structure is set up to ensure that the goals of the organization are reached, relatively independently of the individual personality characteristics of the people involved. Of course there are certain requirements (skill, knowledge, honesty, co-operativeness etc.), but among people meeting these requirements there are very considerable personality differences.

On the other hand, the organization affects the people working in it. But if, as a consequence of this, any changes are brought about in their personalities, these changes are only of interest to the organization in so far as they are influencing - favourably or unfavourably - the performance of their tasks. So here again the interest in personality is limited.

In general, people are willing to perform their task only if they derive a certain amount of satisfaction from it. Every organization has to take this into account, that is to say, every organization is in its own way concerned with the motivations of the people in it. Since motivation is not only dependent on so-called incentives, but to a very large extent also on socio-psychological factors, many social psychologists have chosen it as a topic for research. The development of adequate methods for the study of motivation under controlled conditions has taken a long time, but recently some important advances have been made in this direction.

We hope to have made it clear that many social psychologists are doing research on problems closely connected with actually existing tensions in present-day Western society. Doubtlessly, most of them are hoping that their work may contribute to a reduction of these tensions, to the solution of urgent social problems, to the realization of crucial values.

Now these values themselves can be considered to constitute a social phenomenon also. It is not surprising, therefore, that several social psychologists have given attention to the question, how values do arise, by what processes and under which conditions they are accepted. Closely related to the study of values is the study of norms and other rules for behaviour.
The values accepted in a given society are as a rule not mutually independent. They often form a value-system. A culture has as one of its major characteristics such a system of values. As long as one confines oneself to the culture one lives in, it is extremely difficult to bring to light its value-system. The necessary distance and detachment are hard to achieve. A far more efficient and fruitful method consists in contrasting two different cultures, or - in complex and heterogeneous cultures - two different sub-cultures. In the study of values therefore a cross-culturally comparative methodology is usually adopted. There are close connexions between this field of study and so-called cultural anthropology.

Any individual within a culture is subject to a number of environmental influences, and modifies his behaviour accordingly. One can attempt to understand the relative uniformity in the behaviour of participants in the same culture in terms of the similarity of the influences acting upon them. The study of environmental influences is one of the standard topics of present day social psychology. It ranges from research on child-rearing practices to content analysis of mass-media of communication, from the study of the effects of housing arrangements on prejudice to the study of the efficiency of training programmes for educators - to name just a few examples contained in our material.

In order to be effective, environmental influences must be perceived. Now to perceive is not to be a passive recipient for stimuli coming from the outside: perception is an active, organizing, structuring process. Furthermore, the way in which we perceive an object is not independent of our previous experience and actual situation. This is why our perceptions may become inadequate, biased or distorted. This applies to our perception of physical objects, and most certainly also to our perception of social phenomena. Thus, it is only to be expected that a number of social psychologists should have been carrying out studies on perception and its determining factors.

Even from this brief and sketchy outline it may be gathered that the object of social psychology, actual behaviour in its social setting, is very complex indeed. There is a multitude of interrelated aspects and factors, and it is practically impossible to study them all at once. Most of the studies mentioned above therefore concentrate upon the interrelationships of a few factors only.

It is, however, quite possible, and even very probable, that not all the factors studied are scientifically speaking equally important. Some are probably more fundamental than others, their variation may very well be the underlying cause of the variation of several others. The need for the discovery of these basic variables is constantly felt in social psychology. There is a tendency to look for the basic variable outside social psychology: for example, in sociology or economics. Others feel that the basic variables are to be identified as personality characteristics: in a sense this again would mean that the basic factors would lie outside social psychology.

A third approach tries to find what may be called the basic interaction variables. Here an attempt is made to abstract both from sociocultural and personality variables, and to clarify and define on an experimental basis the processes inherent in interaction as such. There are already several indications, that the results obtained by this approach may be independent to a very large extent both of the cultural context and of the personality structure of the people involved. If this holds true, there is reason to expect that here
at last a method is found leading to the identification of the basic variables of social psychology, and therefore to the construction of a unitary theory of social behaviour.

These few remarks must suffice as a review of the important trends in current research. We shall now go to a consideration of some of the characteristics of present day social psychology as seen by our respondents.

5. Important methodological aspects of recent research

If we review the general methodological trends in social psychology, several important features appear to stand out. Taking as our starting point the undeniable complexity of the social phenomena, we can roughly distinguish two complementary movements.

On one side, we see a series of attempts to use to the largest possible extent the available knowledge regarding the social situation studied. This knowledge does not stem from social psychology alone, but also from other (social) sciences, like sociology, economics, medicine, history, law etc. The attempt to do justice to the complexity of the social phenomena thus leads to an interdisciplinary approach.

On a smaller scale, a similar trend is visible within psychology proper. In many cases, the traditional barriers between specialized fields of research are being broken down. In this way the study of social phenomena leads to an integration of several psychological disciplines. Thus data on learning, perception, thinking, emotion, personality are sometimes brought to bear on one central problem area.

On the other side, there are numerous studies dealing with what might be called basic interaction variables. Attempts are made to construct - and to test empirically - a theoretical framework encompassing the fundamental phenomena in human interaction. The concepts and theories developed here are generally on a very high level of abstraction. In other words: the results aimed at are of such a nature that they would be valid irrespective of the cultural environment, the organizational setting in which the interaction takes place, the personality of the people involved.

The interdisciplinary approach and the interaction dynamics approach are not to be seen in opposition to each other: it is more adequate to consider them as complementary trends. If, taking up again what has been said in paragraph 3 of this report, we define social psychology as the study of actual behaviour within its social setting, then each of the two approaches mentioned stresses a special aspect of what is implicit in the concept of actual behaviour.

The interdisciplinary approach accentuates the multiplicity and diversity of the factors affecting actual behaviour. Actual, i.e. concrete, hie-et-munc behaviour can - and must - be looked upon as a process resulting from a very complex set of conditions - physical, biological, psychological, cultural, political, economical etc. None of these factors acts separately: they are closely interwoven and to a large extent interdependent. This is one of the reasons why a one-by-one approach is scarcely sufficient, at least for the purpose of social psychology: such an approach would inevitably imply abstraction from all other factors, and thus emphasize one aspect of behaviour at the expense of all the others. Only a genuinely interdisciplinary modus operandi can be
expected to deal adequately with the intricate network of relationships in which behaviour is embedded.

Interaction dynamics, on the other hand, tries to explore the basic factors operating in any interaction situation, to discover the fundamental laws of interaction behaviour underlying every single multi-conditioned interaction process. This does not mean an underestimation of the importance of the other factors affecting actual behaviour, no more than the study of the laws of gravity means an underestimation of the importance of local geographical and meteorological conditions in any falling process. It does mean, however, that the level of abstraction is higher, that the results are more general, that notwithstanding the apparent diversity of the multi-conditioned complex interaction phenomena their fundamental unity is brought to light.

The basic interaction concepts evolved thus far refer to processes which are typically socio-psychological. That is to say, they refer to psychological processes which by their very nature require interaction between different individuals, like cohesiveness (of a group), communication, rejection etc. In the study of interaction dynamics social psychology thus emerges as a basic social science, interaction being the basic social process.

The inter-disciplinary and the interaction dynamics approach therefore are each other's complement. The one does justice to the complexity of the social environment, the other studies the general principles of behaviour within this environment.

Now it must not be inferred from the foregoing that all the important research programmes in social psychology can readily be classified as falling under one of these two headings. There are numerous important studies which are somewhere in between. But, as far as recent methodological advances are concerned, there is good agreement among our respondents that the two trends mentioned are the most outstanding. (Compare Table 2, Appendix C.)

Apart from, though of course related to, methodological advances there are also recent developments in techniques. This report will not deal with techniques in any detail. We will limit ourselves to the statement that among the technical advances mentioned by our respondents the following seem the most important:

- development of new statistical techniques
- the application of quantitative methods to new fields (e.g., meaning);
- systematic combination of quantitative and qualitative data;
- improved scaling techniques;
- improved observation techniques;
- improved sampling techniques;
- accumulation of skills in designing experiments.

After this brief survey of recent methodological and technical advances, we will now proceed to a consideration of the most important lacunae in our socio-psychological knowledge.
Gaps in present knowledge

It goes without saying that to express an opinion about gaps in our knowledge is a ticklish affair. If we are able to make clear statements about what we do not (yet) know, we are already halfway on the route to knowledge. Scientific results depend fully as much on the way questions are phrased as on the answers to these questions. So the probabilities are that the most important gaps will be those nobody is even aware of.

To put it in another way: our opinions about what we do not know undoubtedly are a function of what we do know. And since our present knowledge is clearly inadequate, we cannot but expect that our opinions about the gaps in our knowledge will not be very adequate either.

Keeping this restriction in mind, we shall now try and summarize what our respondents had to say about this subject. (Table 3, Appendix B). Their answers cover a wide range. There are those who say that the whole field of social psychology is composed mainly of lacunae and those who express the opinion that knowledge is not lacking but rather the application of knowledge we already possess.

Also, several respondents express themselves in very general terms, while others mention specific fields or even problems. Among both categories, there is very little unanimity. Under the circumstances, great caution is needed in interpreting our data; similar caution is urged upon the reader of this report with respect to the tentative conclusions we shall put forward.

We shall start with the more general expressions of dissatisfaction with the present state of knowledge in social psychology. One of the remarks made fairly often concerns the lack of adequate theories. Most of these respondents seem to refer to gaps in our present theoretical knowledge which prevent us from understanding fully the implications of our empirical data, and also from formulating useful questions to be put to the test of empirical research. But a few of them have quite another thing in mind when they speak of inadequate theorizing. They want to make it clear that there is at present too much concern with wide-range and very general theories, built upon a most slender empirical basis. They see a danger here, viz. that these premature theoretical conceptions may predispose the research workers to the study of phenomena of doubtful relevance, at the same time blinding them to other, probably more important aspects of social reality.

Some of our respondents express concern with the basis of present-day theories in a different, though not unrelated context. They are doubtful whether the empirical results thus far obtained will stand up under different cultural conditions. There is ample justification for this apprehension. In fact, the bulk of the material on which social psychology is based was gathered in the United States of America, and not a small part again of this material was obtained from college students. It is perfectly understandable, therefore, that several of our respondents stress the urgency of cross-cultural research in social psychology, so as to broaden the factual basis of its principle theories.

As to the applicability of socio-psychological theories to actual social situations, here again opinions differ. Some respondents are convinced that more should be done in this direction or, at least, that systematic research into the feasibility of practical applications should be undertaken. But also those are not lacking who feel that social psychology should be developed - at least in the near future - without any thoughts about its eventual social
usefulness, and that the inclination of many social psychologists to improve the society they live in contributes a danger rather than an asset for their science.

Turning now from these general considerations to some of the problem areas mentioned in reply to our questions, we find several respondents mentioning the lack of studies of a longitudinal kind, that is, stretching out over a long period of time. It is true that most studies published up till now are mere snapshots of moments in a continuous process. Undoubtedly, in some instances much could be gained if we could supplement these snapshots with films, to use the same metaphor again. There is much in processes like social change, cultural displacement, socialization, formation of organizational structure etc., which could be clarified by long-range studies. The same applies to the influence of membership of a group, or participation in a sub-culture, upon perception, motivation, thinking etc.

Some respondents stress our lack of insight even into relationships which are nearly always taken for granted, form the implicit basis of extensive research, but according to them still need systematic study. As an example the relation between attitudes and behaviour might be cited. Similarly, much has been written about social perception. But we must not forget that the research on perception in general is far from complete and, secondly, that it is doubtful whether one is justified in neglecting the difference between perception of social and non-social objects. This situation obtains also in related fields, like learning, emotion etc., where often results acquired under very specific laboratory conditions are brought to bear in an uncritical way upon data of a quite different character. More detailed and differentiated research programmes are certainly needed to test the "generalizability" of many findings, both in general and social psychology.

In addition to mentioning problem areas, several respondents stress the lack of factual knowledge concerning actual social problems in the world of today. Although they would perhaps agree with some of our other respondents, that such purely fact-finding studies seldom contribute much to the advancement of our theoretical knowledge, nevertheless they take the stand that knowledge of facts is the only solid base for adequate social action, and that social action is urgently needed. We shall not here discuss the few suggestions made for specific research programmes in this direction, but take up this matter again when we touch upon possibilities for co-operation between Unesco and social psychologists.

On the whole, it seems clear that social psychologists are not satisfied with the progress made in their field up till now. It remains to be seen, where, according to them, the responsibilities lie for this state of affairs.

7. Limiting factors in present-day research

What are the major obstacles to a further development of social psychology? On this question also we obtained a great variety of replies. We shall classify the obstructing factors mentioned by our respondents under two main headings:

- external and internal limitations. (Table 4, Appendix B.)
Of the external limitations, lack of funds is the one most frequently mentioned. Lack of money means: no possibility for hiring and training personnel, insufficient equipment, no thoroughgoing analysis of data, premature publication etc. This limitation is so obvious, that little need be said about it.

Still, a few words about the causes of the present financial situation of social psychology might be appropriate. The main reason - at least according to several of our respondents - seems to be lack of recognition of social psychology. For example, in many universities - especially outside the United States of America - social psychology is not accepted as a special subdivision of the social sciences, has no institute or even Chair of its own. Furthermore, the value of its findings is often questioned, there are misgivings about the applicability of its results, in brief: it is not considered a promising investment. The influence of these factors becomes clear when social psychology is contrasted with, for instance, medicine and physics, whose financial resources are in the whole incomparably greater.

But even when social psychology gets support from money distributing agencies, the situation has its perils. For the money thus made available often must be spent on research which is from a scientific point of view unimportant, if not worthless. This statement needs some amplification. Let us therefore consider some characteristic features of the so-called contract-research. Usually there is a time-limit. Although this is in itself not at all bad, it has the unfortunate consequences that usually very little time is spent in planning, that exploratory studies are kept to a minimum, that standardized and traditional procedures are followed and no attempts are made to develop new and perhaps more adequate methods. These drawbacks are the more deplorable because, when money is furnished by official sources for research on certain problems, these problems are sometimes extremely intricate and difficult: the urgency of social problems mostly varies in direct ratio to their complexity. As yet, social psychology is not in a position to solve such problems, or even to tackle them adequately. Nevertheless, if a contract is offered to a social psychologist, he will accept it, because it enables him to keep his staff, to gain experience, to consolidate the position of social psychology. The disadvantages, of which he is well aware, he takes into the bargain. Unfortunately, there are only very few agencies who provide money without specifying the purpose for which it has to be used. Where, however, such a situation obtains - and this is the case chiefly in the United States of America - a relatively rapid progress of social psychology can be observed.

These remarks lead us to a consideration of the second category of obstacles to the further development of social psychology, the internal limitations.

Three types of internal limitations can be distinguished, those pertaining to:

(a) the theoretical development of social psychology;
(b) the capacities of social psychologists;
(c) the object of social psychology.

With regard to the present state of theory in social psychology, many of our respondents are far from satisfied. They express their dissatisfaction in various ways. Some say that not enough basic research is being carried out; others remark that many theories are not sufficiently tested that, for instance, there is very little replication of experiments. Others again state as their opinion that social psychology is not yet able even to formulate its fundamental problems clearly. There are also some respondents who regret the lack of
theoretical integration, the divergency of the various approaches. There are complaints about the inappropriate use of statistical techniques, but also about the abundance of non-quantitative, qualitative or phenomenological approaches. On the other hand, several respondents point to the fact that social psychology is still in its infancy, that within a very short time much has been accomplished already and that though there is certainly no reason for contentment, things could be much worse than they are now.

We shall briefly discuss these opinions. In doing so, we shall have to refer both to paragraph 3, dealing with the definition of social psychology and with its relationships to other social sciences, and to paragraph 6, where some of the gaps in our present knowledge were outlined.

We have defined social psychology as the study of actual behaviour in its social setting. Now, since even from a purely biological point of view, man is certainly one of most complicated organisms, it is evident that the study of his social behaviour, i.e. his interaction with other men, is no simple undertaking. Perhaps the interaction between these extremely complicated organisms is the most complex and difficult scientific object thinkable. When we further keep in mind the fact that scientific psychology started barely a hundred years ago, that social psychology came into its own less than thirty years ago, while on the other hand the physical sciences, whose object certainly is less complex than that of social psychology, look back upon a history of centuries, we can scarcely expect that we should now already have reached a stage where there is general satisfaction with our theories. Furthermore the very complexity of the object of social psychology not only permits, but provokes a series of different approaches, each of them justifiable, none of them final. And lastly, nothing is more common for scientists than expressing their dissatisfaction with their present state of knowledge. A scientist who thinks he knows enough - if there exists such a specimen - perhaps would believe himself, but would not be believed by his colleagues. The very fact that social psychologists are not satisfied with their theories makes social psychology possible. It does not follow from this that ignorance is desirable. Lack of theoretical insight is a severe handicap. But, since every science has overcome this obstacle, there is no reason to suppose that social psychology will fail, unless indeed it poses problems too difficult for mere humans.

This brings us to the second category of internal limitations mentioned by our respondents: the abilities of the social psychologists themselves.

Several of our respondents comment on this topic. Some of them say, that social psychologists lack originality, prefer the traditional ways of thinking to new and unusual ideas. Others express their concern with the shortage of creative persons; they say that there are about as many people as we can use available for subaltern jobs, but that there is a great need of pioneers and leaders of thought. Still others take issue with the alleged fact, that many social scientists want to do good rather than work well, and in their hurry to improve society forget the search for truth. Questions of professional status are also mentioned: there is in academic circles - especially in the United States of America - great pressure to publish and this leads sometimes to sloppy work.
The present writer tends to believe that social psychology in this respect is neither better nor worse off than other sciences. Original, creative students are a small minority everywhere; there is no reason why in social psychology the proportion of the chosen versus the called should be more favourable than elsewhere. And if there are enough people with modest gifts willing to work in subaltern functions that is an asset rather than a liability. For that matter, we must not forget that the facilities for training in social psychology in large parts of the world are practically negligible; with better training also the achievements of the rank and file can improve considerably. As to the assertion that numerous social psychologists are motivated by a desire to achieve practical results, even if true this in itself would not constitute a danger to social psychological theory. The motivations of scientists are as obscure as those of other persons, and it is hard to decide whether, for instance, personal ambition is more conducive to the construction of adequate theories than a wish to help others. There is, however, another problem closely connected with motivation, which is of more importance to our present subject. Social psychologists, wishing to contribute to the general welfare, can scarcely avoid being biased in a certain direction. Such a bias might influence their judgment, and invalidate their conclusions. Now perhaps nobody participating in social life escapes having a personal bias. But this does not always mean that his scientific work will be affected by his personal convictions; they may be wide apart, as in the case of a mathematician or an astronomer. For a social psychologist, however, the distinction between his convictions as a citizen and as a scientist is far more difficult to maintain. Consequently, there is a real danger of interference between the two, with all its undesirable effects.

This brings us to the last category of obstacles, viz. those inherent in the object of social psychology.

Social psychology is of course a form of social activity: indeed, what is not? It follows that social psychologists do not work in a social vacuum; they have to pattern their research according to the structure of the society they are living in. In order to be able to work at all, they have to be accepted or at least tolerated by their environment. This means they have to comply with a number of restrictions, often to the disadvantage of their effectiveness as researchers. Some symptoms of this state of affairs deserve a brief discussion.

Social psychologists as a rule have no opportunity to study the interaction processes leading to the most important decisions. This applies, for example, to political decisions: social psychologists do not attend Cabinet meetings, nor are they permitted to study the behaviour of actual leaders of government, of actual makers of policy. The same holds true in industry: the top management often is willing to admit social psychologists to the workshop or the offices, but only a few Boards of Directors are willing to submit themselves to the same kind of scrutiny they think appropriate for the workers. Even with the methods now available, social psychology could achieve far more than it actually does. But it meets with very strong resistance as soon as it approaches areas of crucial importance. Although this resistance is quite understandable for a number of reasons it would take us too far to discuss, it certainly constitutes a major obstacle to certain types of research.

Other limiting factors are of a different kind. For instance, it would be very useful to conduct a series of studies on the social development of children with controlled home environments. This is in itself a very difficult
task; but it becomes impossible on ethical grounds, as soon as in the controlled environment factors are present, which might influence the development of the children in an unfavourable way. To take an extreme example: studies of children reared in isolation would provide us with badly needed material. But obviously such experiments are out of the question. To solve a number of its most important problems, social psychology has to use very indirect and roundabout methods, mostly yielding very ambiguous results. This follows from the fact that it studies human beings and thus has to allow precedence of ethical over scientific values whenever there is a conflict between them.

8. Unesco and social psychology

In this final section of our report we shall try to indicate some ways in which social psychology can contribute to the realization of the goals of Unesco: the promotion of mutual understanding and peaceful relations among the nations of the world. Such a contribution essentially would consist in making available present knowledge for the solution of some of the most urgent problems with which Unesco is confronted. We therefore will discuss some problem areas where, according to our respondents, social psychology might make useful contributions, and offer some suggestions about procedure and organization.

Undoubtedly there exist many obstacles to an adequate mutual understanding between the nations. These obstacles are of different kinds. We shall confine ourselves here to two main classes: obstacles arising from conflicting interests (political, economic, etc.) and obstacles due to misconceptions. These two classes are nearly always closely interconnected, but nevertheless it would be extremely worthwhile to study in some tension areas just how they are related, and how they can be made to disappear. This is especially important, because probably each kind of obstacle would require specific countermeasures.

Social psychologists could assist Unesco effectively in combating mutual misconceptions among nations (or other groupings). They could study the communication, the transmission (and distortion) of information; the perception, influenced both by the available information and the context it is embedded in; the attitudes, as influenced by perception and a number of other factors, among them the value-systems of the different nations etc. Furthermore, they could indicate and try out ways and means for changing those misconceptions, thus bringing about a more realistic appreciation of other nations, their aims and purposes.

Another promising and highly important field of study would be the internal structure of a nation and its influence upon its relationships with other nations of a similar or different structure. Problems like the distribution of power, the types of leadership accepted or rejected, the interrelations between the various social strata, the mechanisms of social control could be tackled by research teams, consisting of social psychologists co-operating with sociologists and representatives from other social sciences.

More specifically, the rise of aggressive attitudes, hostility, prejudice, tension could be studied in different contexts and among different conditions. This in turn would lead to proposals for prophylactic measures, both of a collective and an individual nature.
All this could be done, or at least attempted, provided social psychologists were given the opportunity. None of the problems named here is outside the scope of present day social psychology: they could be tackled by using existing methods and techniques. However, no systematic use has ever been made of the services social psychologists could offer.

This is why many social psychologists have the feeling that the real difficulties lie elsewhere; that not the problems of international understanding in themselves are unsolvable, but that scientific solutions are not desired. In this report it has been made sufficiently clear that our knowledge of social phenomena is still very restricted; if, however, this knowledge was as efficiently used as, for instance, the available knowledge in physics or chemistry, many harmful and dangerous tensions could be reduced.

So, as far as co-operation with Unesco on existing international problems is concerned, the first task of social psychologists would be to clear a path for social psychology. How could this be done?

Perhaps in the first place by making available, to a large number of key persons, information about social psychology, what it is and what it can do. Such information would have to be of a non-technical nature, because it is aimed at persons who are not themselves social psychologists. This might be the first step in creating a different climate of opinion, in establishing confidence in the possibility of obtaining objective results by sociopsychological methods. In this process Unesco itself could play a major rôle. It could be the channel through which such information was distributed, could in general have a mediating function between the policy-making bodies and social psychologists.

Secondly, social psychology must try to broaden its geographical basis. In many countries there exist practically no training facilities for social psychologists. In fact, social psychology at the moment is chiefly concentrated in the United States of America. But if other countries have their own social psychologists, this will facilitate the acceptance of social psychology in each of these countries. So, if at the existing training centres opportunities could be created for the training of students from other geographical areas, a very useful purpose would be served.

The spreading of social psychology over larger areas, although very desirable in itself, creates communication problems. Even now, European social psychologists have trouble in getting their work known to their American colleagues. Effective communication is indispensable for the development of any field of research. Especially for social psychology exchange of data obtained in different countries is of vital importance, because many of its basic variables are dependent on the national or the cultural environment. Truly international media of communication thus have to be established. Perhaps here would lie another task for Unesco.

Exchange of data on research in different cultures however is scientifically useful only if these data are comparable. In order to obtain comparable data, cross-cultural research has to be strictly co-ordinated. Such co-ordination presupposes that there is intensive communication right from the beginning of the research planning, through the actual carrying out of the operation until the final reports are written. This kind of comparative and co-ordinated research is
badly needed, but has practically never been realized. If Unesco could stimulate the development of long-range research projects of this kind, it would make a major contribution to the development of social psychology. At the same time it would hasten the solution of some of the fundamental problems it is itself concerned with. For undoubtedly differences in cultural background must be counted among the most effective barriers to harmonious relations between nations. If the exact nature of these differences could be ascertained, their extent and their impact on the various aspects of individual and social behaviour be established, their origin and growth be studied, real progress would have been made towards better mutual understanding.

For such an undertaking, as indeed for any major programme, a team of social psychologists must be assembled, preferably supplemented by scientists from other disciplines. In fact, for nearly every problem of direct interest to Unesco an integrative and inter-disciplinary approach seems to promise the best results. The present writer, who happens to have some experience with the procedure, is fully aware of the great difficulties in this kind of team-work, but is even more impressed by its potentialities.

The projects thus far outlined for co-operation between Unesco and social psychologists are on a rather large scale. But in view of the fact that, at present, social psychology is - to say the least - not generally recognized as a potential ally in the struggle for the improvement of international relations, one might well argue for a more modest beginning. A less ambitious and less extensive programme has undeniable advantages. It is easier to plan and carry out, it is less costly, and results are sooner available. With those advantages in mind, several of our respondents have mentioned projects of a smaller size, and deserving very serious consideration.

Thus it has been proposed to study the effectiveness of traditional means of extending people's knowledge of other countries. Nowadays nearly every country has its information and propaganda centres, presumably with the purpose of spreading adequate knowledge, or at least of creating a favourable opinion, about itself. Are the techniques used successful, and under what conditions? An often recommended cure against misconceptions about other countries is travel. Is travel really effective in this direction and, if so, what kind is the most effective? These are questions which could be answered rather quickly, provided a well designed research programme was adopted.

One of the techniques most frequently used to exchange information and reach agreement on an international level is the conference. It might be very worth while to study international conferences from a socio-psychological point of view, in order to determine what are the usual procedures, what are the specific difficulties, how could the efficiency be improved etc. Such a project, though perhaps somewhat more difficult and laborious than the two preceding ones, nevertheless is perfectly feasible.

On a somewhat broader scale, but still not so large as to take a nation as the unit of analysis, would be studies about regions or communities. For instance, much could be learned from a longitudinal study of the effect of technological change on a given community. Another project well worth considering would be the study of the relations between communities and their change over time. Such studies, even on a comparatively small scale, might well furnish valuable cues for the understanding of similar phenomena on an international level.
These few examples are mentioned only to indicate some of the directions in which social psychology could assist Unesco. As has been said before, most social psychologists are keenly impressed by the urgency of today's social problems and by the necessity for quick action. There is no doubt at all that if Unesco should make an appeal to them, they would eagerly come forward to offer their co-operation.

For this co-operation to be effective it must start right at the beginning, i.e. when the problems are formulated. The task of the scientist does not consist only in answering questions, but also in phrasing them. It is often a serious handicap for any scientist to be confronted by problems put forward by others, especially when these others are laymen in his field. If Unesco could secure the permanent co-operation of some social psychologists to give advice on the problems it wants to have studied, many unnecessary difficulties could be avoided. Such an arrangement would have the further advantage that Unesco could stay informed about current research activities and about recent theoretical advances in social psychology.

As has been mentioned in paragraph 3, social psychology has well founded claims to be the basic science of social behaviour. As such, it has to offer to Unesco knowledge, methods and techniques of fundamental importance to the purposes of this Organization. Up till now, contacts between Unesco and social psychology have been rather restricted. Perhaps the calling of the conference in Paris during August 1952, of which this report is one of the results, will inaugurate a period of intensive and fruitful co-operation between Unesco and social psychologists.

In concluding, a few remarks about the scope and intentions of this report ought to be made. It cannot and does not pretend to be an adequate survey of present day social psychology. Such a survey would require not a short report like this, but at least a large volume. It would have to be based not merely on the well-considered opinions of a comparatively small number of small psychologists, but also on an extensive study of the recent literature. It would involve personal contact between its writer and the leaders of important research centres. As to the time required for its preparation, it would probably require two years of constant work by a competent social psychologist.

The present report gives only the merest outline of some of the topics such a survey would have to cover. It will have served its purpose if it conveys the impression that social psychology has reached a stage in its development where it has so much to offer that it ought not to be overlooked whenever studies of social phenomena are planned. In this very preliminary report this claim cannot be fully substantiated. But after all, what social psychologists are asking for is not the recognition of any such claims, but to be given the opportunity to demonstrate by their work that they can contribute substantially to the realization of the goals of Unesco, which in the last resort are identical with their own.
Appendix A

List of persons who have contributed information used in this report.

Belgium:
Prof. J. Nuttin, Psychological Laboratory, University of Louvain

Canada:
Prof. A.S. Luchins, McGill University, Montreal

England:
Dr. J.C. Flugel, University of London
Dr. Hilde T. Himmelweit, London School of Economics
Dr. Cecily de Monchaux, Department of Psychology, University of London
Prof. Roger Russell, Department of Psychology, University of London

France:
Mr. Paul Maucorps, Centre d'Études Sociologiques, Paris
Dr. Jean Stoetzel, Université de Bordeaux

Germany:
Mr. D. Osmer, Institut für Sozialforschung, Frankfurt

Netherlands:
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Prof. A. Oldendorff, Sociological Institute of the University of Nijmegen

Norway:
Mr. K. Rammetweit, Institute for Social Research, Oslo

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Prof. Richard Centers, University of California, Los Angeles, Cal.
Prof. Stuart W. Cook, New York University, New York
Prof. Allen L. Edwards, University of Washington, Seattle, Wash.
Prof. Franklin Fearing, University of California, Los Angeles, Cal.
Dr. Ekse Frenkel-Brunswik, University of California, Berkeley, Cal.
Prof. Cornelius L. Golightly, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisc.
Dr. George Katona, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.
Prof. Arthur Kornhauser, Wayne University, Detroit, Mich.
Prof. Robert Leeper, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon
Dr. Rensis Likert, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.
Prof. Elliot McGinnies, University of Maryland, Maryland
Prof. Gardner Murphy, Menninger Foundation
Prof. Charles E. Osgood, University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill.
Mr. Hugh J. Parry, Office of Public Affairs, APO 80, Box 930
Dr. H.H. Remmers, Purdue University, Lafayette, Ind.
Prof. Stanley Schachter, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn.
Prof. Robert R. Sears, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
Prof. Kenneth L. Smoke, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Penns.
Dr. Ralph B. Spence, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.
Prof. Leo Srole, Cornell University, Itaca, N.Y.
Prof. Ross Stagner, University of Illinois, Champaign, Ill.
Prof. Goodwin Watson, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.

Switzerland
Prof. Ph. Muller, Université de Neuchâtel
### Appendix B

**Table 1**

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<th>Existing attitudes</th>
<th>Change, development of attitudes</th>
<th>Productivity, morale, motivation</th>
<th>Value, norms</th>
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<th>Perception, cognition</th>
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<th>Interaction processes</th>
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(The percentages add up to more than 100, because several respondents have been working in different areas)

**Table 2**

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<th>Specific techniques</th>
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**Table 4**

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