The Lecture Contains:

- Basic nature of the alternative paradigms of social psychology
- Alternative paradigms to study social behaviour or experiences
- Ethogenics
- Discursive psychology
- Narrative psychology
- Symbolic interactionism
- Ethnomethodology
- Cultural psychology
- Activity psychology

Basic nature of the alternative paradigms of social psychology

- As we learnt in the lecture of Module One about the basic premises of the constructionist social psychology, these are also relevant for most of the new or alternative paradigms that have emerged within social psychology. Let us take a re-look at these basic assumptions (Gergen, 1997; Sampson, 1993): Experiences or behaviour in social situations are not outcomes of mental processes ready to be studied objectively. Experiences and the ways they are shared among the community members are socially constructed. These depend not only on the ways we have been socialized but also the socio-historical context in which the person is living. Primary function of talk is not to represent a talk-independent reality but to initiate or regulation some social action. Therefore, for example, when a person shares his or her ideas about happiness or suffering, he or she is also acting out social roles and the shared ideas may be different depending upon the social roles into which the person is placed. In exploring a person's experiences in constructionist version of social psychology, the act of sharing must serve the purpose of 'finding a voice' for the sharer. This is the foundation of trust on which the sharing in research interaction is based.

Alternative paradigms to study social behaviour or experiences

- According to Moghaddam and Harre (1995), the alternative paradigms or approaches within social psychology are the following :

  - Ethogenics
  - Discursive psychology
  - Narrative psychology
  - Symbolic interactionism
  - Ethnomethodology
  - Cultural psychology
  - Activity psychology

- Let us now try to understand these approaches in some detail.

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Ethogenics

- Social events or 'episodes'. Dramaturgical model (analyzing the meanings of the ideas shared as well as the purpose these served to the partners in communication) is used to reveal its basic structure.

- How people act and think is profoundly influenced, even in some cases determined, by local norms of proper and improper behaviour, and of correct and incorrect patterns of thought.

  - Marsh, Rosser and Harre (1997) studied the social psychology of soccer hooliganism using ethogenics approach. They analyzed the episodes of football violence by studying the life course of sixty fans and found out that the violence served as sequential rites of passage through which the fans created and sustained the status of the group.

Discursive psychology

- It is assumed that the psychological phenomena may be understood as the properties of the communication among the persons in an interaction. For example, a decision about the kind of toys to be purchased for the kid depends upon the nature of conversation between the kid and the parents and the hierarchy between the kid and the parents.

  - Middleton and Edwards (1990) studied the discursive construction of memories and reported how there were created in everyday conditions where the records were scarce or unavailable. Various versions of past got negotiated among the actors through the processes of distribution of 'memorial rights' among themselves and the weight given to their contributions.

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Narrative psychology

- Narrative psychology focuses on the narrative conventions or rules available in the society as it is posited that these conventions or rules pivotally shape the episodes of everyday living and the people's constructions of the events in their daily life

  - In a study Davies and Harre (1990) studied the sources of narrative conventions through which the interactions between men and women were managed in Australia. As Moghaddam and Harre (1995; p. 63) elaborated, "Davies arranged for young children to hear feminist reworking of fairy tales, in which the traditional gender roles are recast, with "powerful" female heroes, and so on. She found that the traditional narrative conventions determined the way these children in turn retold the story, in such a way that traditional roles were accredited to the characters of the tale. The narrative conventions through which a "proper" reading of a tale is achieved must lie deeper in the culture that the current plot of any tale."

Symbolic interactionism

- It is posited in the symbolic interactionist perspective that people's behaviours are not merely functions of their individual intentions that of the social situations in which they are located. Individual minds are taken to be the products of shaping the individual's subjective experiences by the patterns of social interacts, particularly the views of the "generalized other" or the culturally shared meaning systems about an idea or an action.

  - In Goffman's (1968) study of the social psychology of "passing", Moghaddam and Harre (1995, p. 64) noted, "… he analyzes and catalogues the symbolic displays and devices through which people collude in concealing their "spoiled identities". He developed an elaborate analytical apparatus, involving particularly the idea of fatefulness, the idea that certain episodes in people's lives, if known, would transform their current situation and standing. The structure of interpersonal interaction is controlled, in part, by the necessity to prevent the discovery of stigmata, or to facilitate collusion in their redefinition."

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Ethnomethodology

- Ethnomethodology focuses on the methods by which human being use their implicit 'skills' to produce thoughts, conversational contributions, and social and practical actions.

  - As Moghaddam and Harre (1995; p. 64) points out, "The aim of ethnomethodology is to make explicit the implicit methods by which human life is constructed, moment by moment, inlcuding those bits of human life we call "doing sociology", as well as those which we call "standing in line to buy a train ticket", or "shopping"."

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Cultural psychology

- Cultural psychology takes up the challenge of understanding the implicit conventions or shared meaning system of diverse cultural setting. The aim is not to map the psychological realities with the help of pre-existing universal categories. However, this approach does not deny the existence of psychological universals too that may emerge from a comparison of phenomena across cultures (Shweder, 1991).

  - In her study of the emotion system among the Ifaluk population in Philippines, Lutz (1988) analyzed the vocabularies and narrative accounts of people to understand the meanings of and social purpose of their emotions. For example, she reported an emotion, metagu (fear/anxiety/embarrassment) was associated with social failure rather than physical danger and was preceded by another emotion, sort, (righteous indignation/social offence). Thus, as it can be noticed, emotional expressions were like appropriate speech-acts sequentially arranged in the socio-cultural context.

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Activity psychology

- Activity psychology, is based on the work of Eastern European psychologists, Luria, Vygotsky, and Leontiev. It assumes that rather than being passive spectators of the psychological processes within and around them, human beings are goal-oriented intentional beings within their socio-cultural context. It also challenges the causal model of human cognition and behaviour.

  - As von Cranach and Harre (1981) have reported, the basic focus of activity psychology is to explore the means/end patterns of human beings. They reported the analysis of small children's dispute over toys, and that of steps undertaken in the production of transistor radios where these found these to be shaped by the negotiations in accordance with the local conventions.