

**B. A. Part -II - SOCIOLOGY**  
**Paper - III (Methods of Social Research)**

**Topic :** Observation  
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**OBSERVATION**

● **Introduction**

Sociologists use observation as a research method where they watch people in a social situation and record what is said and done. Observation is a method that employs vision as its main means of data collection. It implies the use of eyes rather than of ears and the voice. It is accurate watching and noting of phenomena as they occur with regard to the cause and effect or mutual relations. It is watching other persons behaviour as it actually happens without controlling it.

Observation are research methods where a researcher observes the behaviour of a group or individuals in order to witness first hand their social behaviours. According to Moser Observation method is classical method of scientific research.

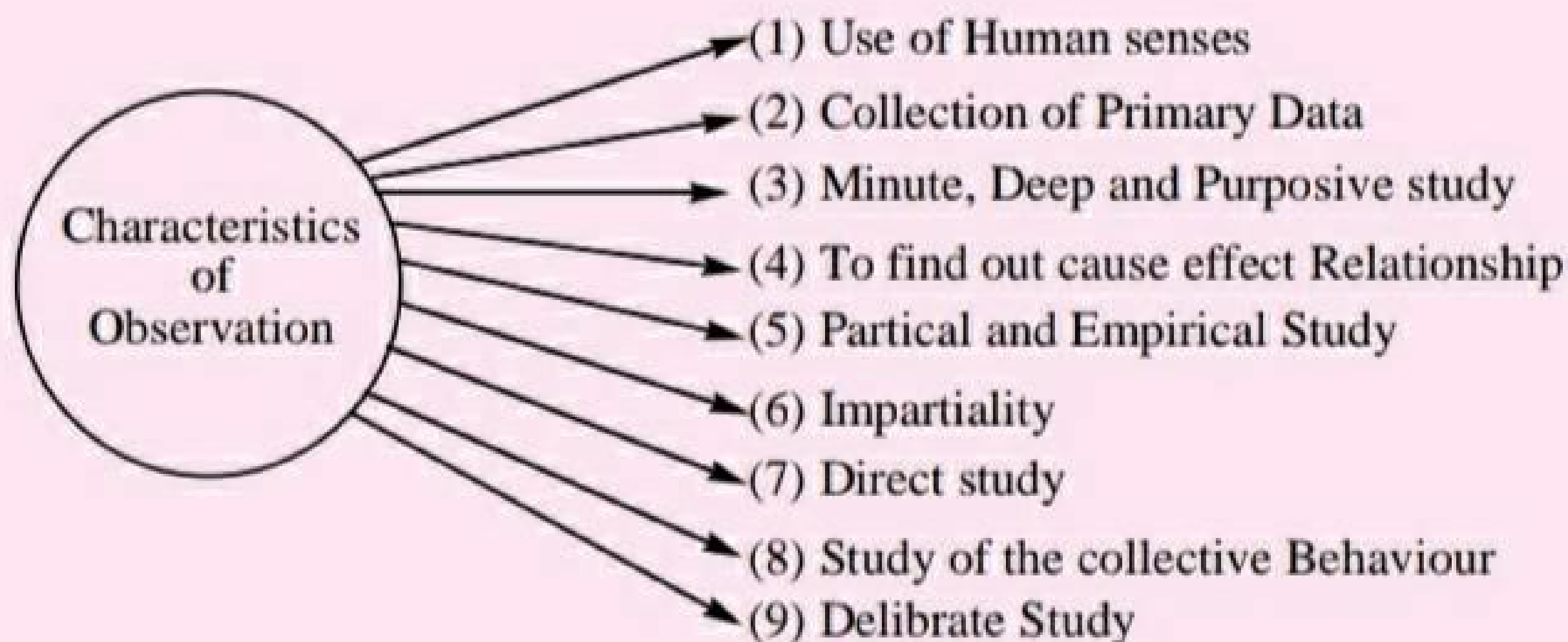
● **According to William J. Goode and Paul K. Hatt :** "Science begins with observation and must ultimately return to observation for its final validation."

A number of sociologists have relied on observation in theory building.

**Example :** George simmel, Goffman, Cooley. These sociologists used behavioural events as evidence to conceptualize their theories on human behaviour and culture.

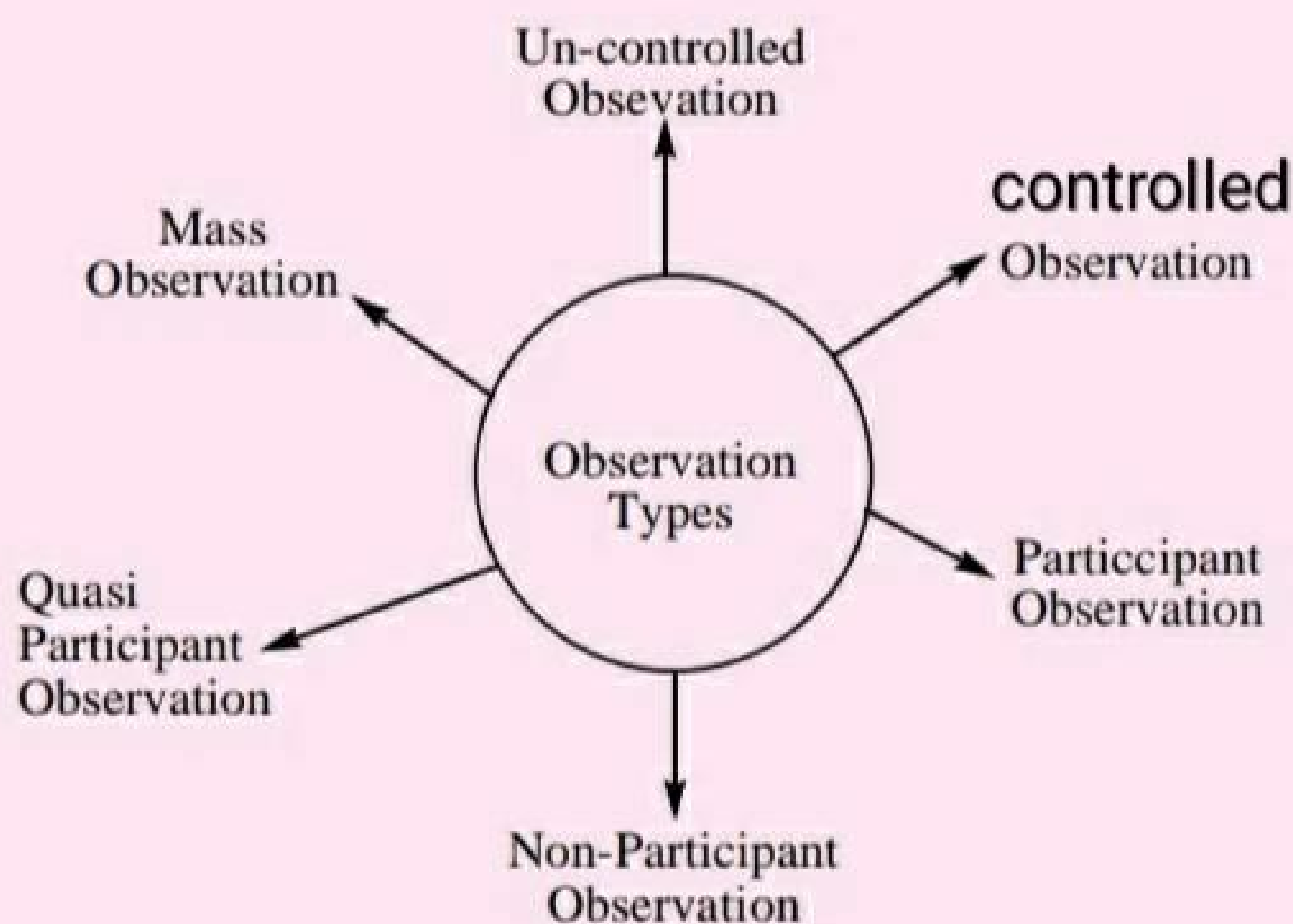
● **Definition :**

- **According to P.V. young :** " Observation is a systematic and deliberate study through the eyes of the spontaneous occurrences at the time they occur.
- **According to C.A. Moser :** "In the strict sense observation implies the use of the eyes rather than of the ears and the voice."
- **According to Oxford concise Dictionary :** "Accurate watching and noting of phenomena as they occur in nature with regard to cause and effect or mutual relations."



● **Types of Observation :**

Observational methods differ from one another along several variables or dimensions. Various types of observation are shown as below .



**(1) Un-Controlled Observation :** Uncontrolled observation means that it is natural. Watch is being studied is uninfluenced by anyone or anything. If you are observing the mating habits of a particular species, and you do not control the temperature or the surroundings of the subjects, then this type of observation would be considered Uncontrolled. it is also called unstructured observation.

**According to Goode and Hatt :** “Most of the knowledge which people have about social relations is derived from un-controlled observation, whether participant or non-participant.”

**(2) Controlled Observation :** Controlled observations organised and planned which employs formal procedure, has a set of well - defined observation categories, and is subjected to high levels of control and differentiation. It is also called structured observation. Controlled observation can be done in two ways :

(a) Control over situations

(b) Control on observer

It is difficult to conduct controlled observation in social research.

**(3) Participant Observation :** It is a method of research in which the researcher joins everyday routine of those he studies and attempts to observe action in its natural contact. Closely associated with anthropology and studies of tribes, an outstanding example is Bronislaw Malinowski's study of Trobriand islanders.

In 1924, Lindeman first used the term Participatory observation in his book, '**Social Discovery**'.

**According to P.V. Young :** The participant observer, using non-controlled observation generally lives or otherwise shares in the life of the group which he is studying.

**According to Goode and Hatt :** This procedure is used when the investigator can so disguise himself as to be accepted as a member of the group.

In India, M.N. Srinivas had used this method in Studying the process of '**Sanskritisation**' in Mysore while Andre Beteille had used it to study social inequality in rural areas (Tanjore village) on the basis of class, status, and power .

**(4) Non-Participant Observation :** In non participant observation the observer remains detached and does not participate or intervene in the activities of those who are being observed. He/she merely observes their behaviour. Sometimes this places the persons being observed in an awkward position and their conduct becomes unnatural. This type of observation is more useful as a tool of data collection because the observer can choose the situations to be observed and can record the data freely.

**(5) Quasi - participant Observation :** Either the researcher is totally drenching in the activity or will be observing every bit in solitude. It is also known as quasi participant observation .

**(6) Mass Observation :** In this method of observation, study work is done by a group of different researchers rather than by any one person.

**According to Hsin Pao Young :** "Mass observation is a combination of controlled and uncontrolled observation ... Mass observation depends on the observing and recording of information by a number of people and the pooling and treatment of their contribution by a central person."

● **Conclusion :**

We can say that observation becomes an effective tool of scientific study when it is planned systematically recorded systematically, is subjected to checks and control and selected observers have skills and are trained.