

Advance Course in Social Psychology

Lecture 15: Attitudes- Part III

Hello friends, welcome back. Today I will continue my discussion on formation of attitudes. In the previous lecture, I have discussed about social learning, social comparison and observational learning. Today I will talk about two most important forms of theories regarding formation of attitudes, which are one of the classic theories of learning that how attitudes are formed, especially in social situation. Let us talk about classical conditioning or learning. This is one of the most famous, most endured theory of learning, which talks about not only learning, but how attitudes are formed.

For instance, as it is mentioned on the slide, an example that my clock radio emits a loud click just before the alarm comes on. So there are two steps to ring the alarm and we can wake up. A small click, although the sound of the click is loud and then in the second step is the alarm which is again a very loud sound. At first, I showed little or no reaction to the click, but now because it has been paired many times with loud music, I usually wake up when I hear the first click even before the music starts.

So in this example, it is very easy to grasp that first there is a click and then there is a loud alarm sound. With the gradual process of understanding that how the alarm will ring, the person also understands that this is how I have to wake up and the person gradually understands that there is a first click before the alarm rings on, I am waking up or leaving my bed immediately. Now this is a form of learning that the person has learned that I have to get up from my bed with the first click and not even waiting for the second stimulus or sound of the alarm. Therefore, we can say that the person has acquired a relationship between the first click, the second alarm music and then how to get up from the bed. So this example is actually a basic form of learning or conditioning in which one stimulus initially which was neutral that means the click which was loud enough, but there was no association between the click and the person who has to get up from the bed.

So that click was not arousing any kind of response from that person. But gradually when the person also understood that with this click I have to get up from the bed, then the person also acquires the neutral stimulus that is the first click also acquires a capacity to repeat or to generate some kind of response from the person. So the neutral stimulus that is the click acquires a capacity to evoke reaction through repeated pairing with another stimulus. That means initially the person understands the click, the sound with the gradual process of pairing the person also understands that with the click only I can get up from the bed. So initially the person is not responding to the click but to the alarm sound but with the gradual process and repeated pairing of the person and the click, the click also evokes the same reaction as that of the alarm music.

So with the gradual process it becomes a signal for the presentation or occurrence of the other. As soon as there is a first click the person responds that means even the click also has acquired

to evoke a desired response from the subject. So this kind of pairing of the subject of the stimulus and the response is known as classical conditioning. So classical conditioning is a basic principle of psychology that when one stimulus that is capable of evoking a response that is the unconditioned stimulus. Here the unconditioned stimulus is the loud sound of the alarm which is at the second step not the click but the second step of the alarm music which is unconditioned in the sense that it does not have to be manipulated at all and the person knows that as soon as after the click there is another sound it is alarm and I have to get off from my bed.

So this is an unconditioned stimulus which regularly precedes another neutral stimulus that means the click and the alarm sound. So the click is the neutral stimulus and alarm is the unconditioned stimulus that one occurs first and can become a signal for the second that is the conditioned stimulus. So in conditioned stimulus the neutral stimulus is the click and the conditioned stimulus is the sound of the alarm but as soon as there is a pairing of the person with that of the neutral stimulus that is the click and then the alarm then it becomes a conditioning because the person has learned to respond appropriately even to the neutral stimulus that is the click and in gradual process of responding or evoking reaction the neutral stimulus also becomes a conditioned stimulus because the neutral stimulus is evoking the similar response with the part of the conditioned stimulus. Conditioned stimulus here means the music of the alarm the sound of the alarm. So this is how classical conditioning helps in forming a particular or disposing a particular behavioral pattern based on association between stimulus and response.

Now in this kind of conditioning the most important thing to understand is that whenever there is any stimulus that evokes a very natural response that is an unconditioned stimulus because we are not making any manipulation to understand that stimulus but conditioned stimulus is the one where some kind of capacity has been generated in that stimulus so that the appropriate response can be evoked from the person. So here it is a basic principle of psychology where there is capability of evoking a response from the unconditioned stimulus which regularly precedes another neutral stimulus. So in long term of association of these stimulus and the response the even the click also becomes an conditioned stimulus or unconditioned stimulus is already the sound of the alarm. Now in this form of classical conditioning the first stimulus occurs individuals expect the second will soon follow as a result they gradually acquire the same kind of reactions to the first stimulus that is what I mentioned just now that even the sound of the alarm evokes a response but with the gradual process of pairing with the click of the sound or with the click of the alarm also the person evokes a similar reaction. So in long run the click and the alarm sound both evoke a similar reaction from the or response from the subject or the person.

So this kind of reaction to the first stimulus as they show to the second stimulus especially if the second is one that induces fairly strong and automatic reactions. Now in this kind of pairing even the click is also evoking the same response and the sound of the alarm is also evoking the same response but it will be found that the second response is more strong and automatic.

So this is how when a person in the environment tries to associate himself with the stimulus in the environment the person also learns to evoke acquired or expected or similar responses to the stimulus in the environment. When this process is being initiated in any social environment or in any form of learning or conditioning process although it is a long term process but there will be a point when the person will evoke an expected response. This is classical conditioning or classical learning or theory of formation of attitude.

So the most important thing when we are talking about formation of attitude based on classical conditioning or learning is that even the neutral stimulus again I am repeating even the neutral stimulus in the example that is click also with long term pairing association also evokes a similar response like that of the sound of the alarm. So this is classical conditioning. So on the slide itself a basic terminology has been mentioned that what is classical conditioning as given by Ivan Pavlov. A basic form of learning in which one stimulus initially which is neutral acquires the capacity to evoke reactions through repeated pairing with another stimulus. So click and the alarm sound when combined all together in long run also the click evokes a similar response.

In a sense one stimulus becomes a signal for the presentation of occurrence of the other. This is how pairing has been done and similar response is being evoked. Now in this conditioning process unconditioned stimulus a stimulus that evokes a positive or negative response without substantial learning. In the example if I go back to the slide after the click there is sound of the alarm. No manipulation has been done in the sound of the alarm and the person knows that I have to get up on this sound.

So no manipulation is done it is a simple learning of the procedure that with this alarm I have to get up from the bed. So there no substantial learning is required. But when we are pairing ourselves or our response with that of the neutral stimulus that is the click then that stimulus neutral stimulus becomes a conditioned stimulus. A stimulus that comes to stand for or signal a prior unconditioned stimulus. So conditioned stimulus is the one that is the click of the sound which also acquires the capacity based on pairing that it will evoke a similar response with that of the sound of the alarm and neutral stimulus becomes a conditioned stimulus which will also evoke a similar response.

So click of the sound also becomes a conditioned stimulus. So when we are talking about conditioning especially classical conditioning then we have two important factors that is unconditioned stimulus, neutral stimulus which is being transformed into conditioned stimulus. Now based on this understanding let us discuss two more examples. A father angrily denounces the latest increase in income taxes this is one situation before a child and the another situation is that the mother is very happy as she announces the election of a candidate she worked for. Now there are two conditions in one situation father is angry and the mother is happy.

Now the child is observing his parents that one is happy one is sad and at the same time the way they are expressing their emotions based on increase in the tax and election of candidates his mother has worked for then they are also exhibiting some nonverbal behavior based on the emotions. Now what can be the emotion if the father is not happy with the news that the income tax has been increased then definitely there has to be a frowning expression on the face or anger is on the face whereas on the face of the mother the emotions are happy the mother is delighted the eyes are dilated and there is so much of smile on the mother's face. Now in the long run what happens that whenever the child has observed and grasped and absorbed these emotions and news within himself in long run whenever that there is a news of the tax or there is election the child also learns to respond accordingly to what his parents has showed on their faces. So in this conditioning the child has paired his father's and mother's emotions with that of the stimulus that is tax increment and election of a person with whom her mother has worked for. Based on these nonverbal emotions the child also creates a pairing between taxes the nonverbal behavior and then how the child will respond accordingly.

So based on the association that the father is angry on the increment of the taxes and the nonverbal behavior the child also pairs him his response with that of the same situation and the child also learns to respond in the similar fashion that means he will also give a very frowning expression whenever he hears about any news in tax increment or whenever he sees any person who has been elected or there is an induce of election of winning over the party then the child also learns to dispose or exhibit a similar nonverbal expression. It is not an immediate process it is about situation and pairing oneself with different stimulus in the environment the child also learns to give the same kind of responses. So all these stimulus in the environment that is the father, the mother, the news and the nonverbal behavior of their parents when associated with the child then those behaviors are also being grasped or learned by the child itself and response in the similar way. So this is how classical conditioning helps in attitude formation. This is one way to understand that how classical conditioning leads to formation of attitude.

So when we are talking about the same example when two stimuli are repeatedly associated the child learns to respond to them with a similar emotional reaction. Father's expression along with the news it has been paired by the child based on nonverbal behavior and the child also exhibits the same kind of emotion. In this case the stimuli are the attitude topic and the parental emotion. Topic is tax increment and the parent's emotion that is a nonverbal behavior when associated the child also responds in the similar fashion. That means those situations evoke a similar response in the child itself it is a learning basically.

So though repeated association a formally neutral stimulus that is the tax or politician begins to elicit an emotional reaction in reaction that was previously solicited only by another stimulus that is the parental emotion. So the child also learns to respond in a similar way whenever there is a topic of election or there is a topic of increment in the tax. Whenever the tax increases are mentioned the child feels an unpleasant emotion and when the elected official is mentioned the child feels a pleasant emotion. So this is classical conditioning based on the observation.

Observation is there but in technical language observation has been made by the child based on pairing or association of the stimulus.

Parents emotion the topic of attitude that is taxes and the nonverbal behavior which is exhibited in form of their emotions and the child also evokes a similar reaction. So this is how classical conditioning helps in formation of different attitude. This is another example of marketing. It is not only about parenting practices or how the child is been brought up in the family. These kind of condition learning are used in different areas of businesses, campaigning, advertisements, corporate campaigning there can be n number of ways to use this kind of attitude formation.

In this example again a beer company which has launched a new product how to market that product in a very financially beneficial manner. So the company will associate that beer company s logo with that of the new product while associating that product with one of the most popular model in the city with this message that this is a best quality. Now these kind of examples will actually create an impression on the customer on the consumer that this is supposed to be the best product because it is being advertised or endorsed by the most popular model in the city and how it can have a deep impact by forming a positive attitude for that product. So if we go by this picture also the most popular model is campaigning or advertising for a new product of beer by the company and that model is associated with the old logo of the company and the new beer. When all these stimulus are being associated paired by the consumer then definitely it evokes a desired response that is increase in the sales of the product.

So if you are marketing a new beer and your target audience is young adult males we might safely assume that attractive young women will produce a positive response that is the most basic form of understanding to advertise any or launch any new product in the market. In that case the company will pair the product repeatedly with the logo of the beer with images of beautiful women and positive attitudes will be formed towards a new beer. This is so obvious but when we are talking about attitude formation this becomes a very a technical process that how attitude is being formed. We do not understand the logic the theoretical background that is being invested in launching a product and creating an impression in the market and on the consumer.

This is how it is being done. This is the basic psychology that works in launching any new product. This is classical conditioning and definitely the consumer will try to associate or pair those stimulus into one and evoke a desired response. As shown in figure many alcohol manufacturers have used this principle to affect sales of its product beneficially. So this is how classical conditioning forms different kind of attitudes. This is another picture where Tiger Woods is advertising for one of the topmost brand of watches and though the Tiger Wood is not at the shop but only at the at the billboard or advertisement board but whenever the customer is at the shop the customer will always remember the face of Tiger Wood that how he has endorsed for the most expensive watch in the market and people will have a very impressive and attitude to buy that product only.

So this is classical conditioning or another way to form new attitude. Now when we are thinking as a customer about Tiger Woods that means we have developed a positive attitude to buy only that particular product. So this is classical conditioning in formation of attitude. Since we are talking about classical conditioning social psychologists have also talked about another form or aspect of classical conditioning that is subliminal conditioning. It is a form of conditioning or learning or attitude formation that whenever there is a stimulus in the environment we tend to not find that stimulus in the environment because it is below an individual's threshold.

We observe we have a capacity to observe stimulus in the environment but some stimulus in the environment are below an individual's threshold that is an individual's capacity that the person will not be able to identify those stimulus in the environment. So findings have also suggested that attitudes can also be influenced by subliminal conditioning that occurs in the absence of conscious awareness of the stimuli involved. So many stimulus are there we cannot pay attention to every stimuli but yes some stimulus exist which are below an individual's threshold that is below our conscious awareness but unconsciously they affect in attitude formation. For instance in one experiment two groups of subjects were selected in one group students saw a photo of a stranger. Once that photo was common in both the groups of a stranger who is engaged in daily routine activities that shopping in a grocery store or walking into her apartment.

At the same time some other kind of photos were also showed to the students in both groups and they were shown in for such a brief moment that they would either induce positive or negative feelings but they even will not realize that they have that there are some negative or positive photos in that process. But ultimately they would induce some kind of feelings whenever they are exposed to those kind of pictures and they were so brief that participants were not aware even of their presence because it was shown for such a brief period of time that anybody would not realize that some kind of pictures have also been shown to us because it is below our conscious level. Now participants who were not consciously exposed to photos that induced positive feelings for example newlywed couple or people playing cards and laughing after showing this they were asked to evaluate that stranger and it was found that the pictures which induced positive feelings and were shown for a very brief period of time even that stimulus positive pictures also had a positive impact on the students and they evaluated the photo of the stranger in a positive term. They liked the picture whereas the other group who were exposed to pictures which induced negative feelings they evaluated the same stranger with negative feelings or negative attitude. Now those negative pictures were that of open heart surgery or a werewolf.

Now the idea is that even though participants were not aware that they have been exposed to some positive or negative photographs but still they had some kind of influence on their response pattern and they responded to the stranger accordingly. The gist is that even some stimulus in the environment which are not consciously analyzed or observed the environment

still have a deep impact on an individual's attitude. Now students who were exposed to positive photographs they have developed a positive attitude for the stranger and students who are exposed to negative pictures they evaluated the same stranger with a negative attitude. This is subliminal conditioning because we are also responding to the stimulus which are below an individual's conscious awareness or threshold. We do not even realize that some kind of stimulus are existing in the environment and they also have a deep impact on our attitude itself to evoke a desired response.

So this is subliminal conditioning which is also a part of classical conditioning. So classical conditioning of attitudes by exposure to stimuli that are below individual's threshold of conscious awareness. This threshold is that if I prick a needle on an individual's palm with some pressure there will be a point when the person would say it is not causing me pain. But as soon as I will put more pressure in putting a needle on the palm at that point the person would say that I am feeling pain.

That point is actually the threshold point. Similarly there are also different stimulus in the environment where we do not feel their existence but still they have some kind of impact on attitude formation. So this is classical conditioning or classical learning which forms an important theory of attitude formation in social psychology right. So this is classical inter conditioning. Next is instrumental conditioning.

This I will continue in the next lecture. Thank you so much.