

Advance Course in Social Psychology

Lecture 02: Introduction to Social Psychology- Part II

Hello friends, welcome back. So today I will continue my discussion with the first module that is introduction to social psychology. And till now we discussed about the historical developments and background of social psychology and what is the scope of this area. Today I will talk about the contemporary issues in social psychology, the recent developments and scope of this field. So the first issue which is a recent trend to understand based on human behavior is social cognition. It is a growing area of social psychology that studies how people perceive, think about and remember information about others.

That means the information that is available pertaining to the other person is being interpreted and understood in different manner that is cognition. So, some other aspects of social cognition which includes are person perception that is interpersonal perception which is study out how people form impressions of others and how people form beliefs about each other while interacting in a particular situation. So whenever two people are interacting with each other they tend to collect so much of information from each other that it forms a base to have a particular and specific impression about the other person. So, this is social cognition or area of social cognition that whatever information one has about the other person, then what impression we can have or form about that particular person.

So, this is social cognition. So, it is concerned with the processing, storage and application of social information. For example, research in this area may focus on the development and use of social schemas. Social schemas here means the ideas which are already available in any environment and how those ideas are being used as a scheme and we relate it to the other person in a particular situation. So aligning the information about the other person we have and aligning the available information of a particular situation will help to form a particular impression about a person.

So this is the area of social cognition. Understanding human behavior or understanding the behavior of other person based on the available information is the major area or focus of social cognition. The main interest that can be expanded based on social cognition is also a part of attribution that how we infer the other person's behavior based on certain factors or causes that what caused a person to behave in a particular manner. So it is an inferential mechanism to understand human behavior. So it is about the explanations we make for people behavior either our own behavior or other person's behavior and we can ascribe the locus of a behavior to either internal or external factors.

Here locus means reason and putting focus on the factors that makes a person to respond in a particular manner. Now this locus of control can be about an individual's internal factors or external factors. May be the situation compelled the person to behave in a particular way or may be an individual's internal factors for instance personality caused him to behave in a particular way. Now this attribution can be for the other person also and it can be for oneself as well. So whenever we are attributing certain reasons to a particular person there can be some distinctiveness at the same time there can be some consistency also that the person is behaving in a very consistent manner in a particular situation or there can be so much of distinctiveness in an individual's behavior based on the situation.

So these type of attributional causes or attributions will help person to understand. So this becomes a process of social cognition which is a recent trend in social psychology. Some other aspects also include such as self-serving bias. It is a tendency to attribute dispositional causes for success and situational causes for failure. For instance I have attained this success because of my own efforts.

This is a self-serving bias. If we do not get success in any task then we will attribute our failure to the external factors that may be the resources were not enough that could facilitate my performance. So this is self-serving bias. Again we are attributing certain reasons to our own factors or own behavioral factors or attributing reasons to some external factors. So this is how we perceive ourselves or our situation and it is a process of social cognition.

It can be in the form of it can be a process where a person is actually enhancing his own self-esteem and this leads to assuming one's success are from innate traits and one's failures are due to situations including other people. So we can attribute our failure to the other person and success only to our own personal factors. The other area is self-concept which is a term referring to the whole sum of belief that people have about themselves. What I think about myself? So this also entails schemas in terms of self-schemas where people have their own strong beliefs about themselves that what they are and how they guide their own self based on their own or relying on their own schemas and how they portray themselves in any social situation. So self-concept is a term referring to the whole sum of belief that people have about themselves.

So according to Hazel Marcus self-concept is made up of cognitive molecules which are called self-schemas. So it is not about individuals one identity. Small things come all together that make up an individual self. This can be personal, it can be professional, one's own hobbies, one's own intentions, one's own personality factors. When all these factors are being combined all together then a self can be created.

This is the schema that this is what I am, this is what I want to be, this is what I can be and how the person tries to compile himself or arrange his own intentions, emotions, feelings, ideas, beliefs about oneself in one set of frame. So this is self-concept. So self-schemas are the beliefs that people have about themselves that guide the processing of self-relevant information. The other aspect of this concept can be in form of self-efficacy, the extent or strength of one's belief in one's own ability to complete a task and reach goals. That is an individual's assessment of one's own competency, abilities and skills to perform the task in a very facilitating and objective manner.

The other aspect of self-concept also deals with self-control, the ability to control one's emotions, behavior and desires in the face of external demands in order to function in society. That is how an individual is able to regulate his own behavior and at the same time understand the behavior of the other person. Then only there can be a regulation of emotions at one's end and the other's end. So this entails self-control. The other is self-presentation or impression management that how a person tends to consciously or unconsciously direct his own behavior towards the other person in a way that he is able to or competent enough to accomplish his own goals or achieve his own targets.

It is a way to influence the other person that the person will comply with your own desires and wishes. So these are the different aspects of social concept which is very much a contemporary issue in social psychology where it deals with self-schemas, self-control, self-efficacy and self-presentation in form of impression management. For example, flattery. It is a goal directed behavior that we try to impress the other person or a person authority who can comply with you and your desires and wishes are being fulfilled. So this is the area of self-concept.

It also focuses on how people develop their self-concepts by varying means such as introspection, feedback from others, self-perception and self and social comparison. Whenever we are in any social situation we interact, we tend to receive feedback from the other person. The information we have we tend to take in that information which helps to understand and enhance our own self-esteem and most importantly people have tendency to compare themselves with the other people in the society or any group in order to enhance their own self or develop their own self and esteem. So these are the different aspects to understand an individual self which is a major area of social psychology. At the same time the other area is social influence that how people tend to confirm, they tend to comply and obey rules so that they tend to continue the membership of the group or any social group where they tend to align with the group goals, align with the rules, align with the norms, align with the status and role that has been assigned to them and that gives them develop their own identity.

So whenever people become the member of the group they are being influenced based on these factors where sometimes different people tend to pursue them so that their own goals are being

achieved, people tend to confirm so that their membership is being continued in the group and they experience a sense of belongingness, people tend to comply so that the ideas are being easily adopted and people tend to obey because there is a mandate that the authority is there and they are supposed to follow the rules assigned by the authority. So these are the different aspects of human behavior that are being influenced in different kinds of social process such as persuasion, conformity, compliance and obedience where persuasion refers to the efforts to change others attitudes through the use of various kinds of messages and relies on appeals rather than strong pressure or coercion. Coercion means strong pressure and which is very much dominating on the other person that one has to comply. So these are the different aspects of understanding the areas of social behavior. We can go little bit deeper into this process such as conformity, it is a tendency to act or think like other members of the group, the identity of the members within a group that is status, similarity, expertise as well as cohesion, prior commitment and accountability of the group help to determine the level of conformity of an individual.

The more we are confirming to the roles, norms and status of the group the more we are aligned with the group norms and the more we are being part of the group. It can be that influence can be in form of compliance which refers to any change in behavior that is due to a request or suggestion from another person. It can be obedience a change in behavior that is a result of a direct order a command from another person. And at the same time an unusual kind of social influence is the self-fulfilling prophecy which is a prediction that is being made that actually causes itself to become true. It is about the other members of the performance that we tend to predict the other person's performance that it is going to be good or bad.

We tend to evaluate before the person performs and we try to make it very much happening in the way that whatever we are saying it becomes true for the other person. So this is how we tend to influence the other person that whatever we are thinking about it is coming out to be true. So these are the way to influence the other person in any social situation. It can be conformity, it can be persuasion, it can be compliance, it can be obedience or even it can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. And the most important contemporary issue is group dynamics.

It is a system of behaviors and psychological process occurring within groups that is intra-group and between groups that is inter-group. That how people tend to interact between groups and within groups and what kind of psychological process evolved when we are dealing with any group behavior. It deals with the problems that members face when a new group is being formed. It is about coalition, it is about cooperation, it is about competition, it is about attitude formation, it is about beliefs, it is about leadership, it is about decision making, it is about impression management, it is about group goals. So group dynamics emphasizes norms, roles, status, democratic leadership, decision making, participation and overall cooperation.

It also encompasses various aspects of the group such as conflict resolution, communication, discrimination, prejudice, cohesiveness, deviance and group therapies. Now here group therapy is a very important term that has been highlighted in the discussion that when groups tend to become very active how they tend to help other members of the group while overcoming different kind of psychological problems and issues. When we are talking about group it is about the therapeutic effects of any group on the members. Now these groups are the psychological groups that provide lot of information and help and assistance to the other members to cope with different kind of psychological problems. So group dynamics is another major contemporary issue in the area of social psychology.

Next comes some famous experiments given by social psychologists which are termed as classical experiments and how social behavior is being studied based on these experiments. So one of the famous experiment was given by Solomon Asch, conformity experiment in the year 1955 and this experiment was conducted in a lab with a very simple task that was assigned to two types of groups. Now the task was very simple to identify the similar line to that of card 1 and card 2 that means the target line X in card 1 has to be resembled to the same line in card 2. The task is very simple and the answer is also very simple but it was found in the experiment that when some specific subjects in the group were assigned in a way just to give a wrong answer to the task that means some subjects answered B the middle line as the right answer it was observed that other members of the group or participants in the group also responded to the wrong answer that is line B is parallel to line in target line X. Gradually it was found that people have this tendency to confirm to the wrong answer with this idea that they should not be excluded from the group.

As soon as it was found that one member did not confirm to the wrong answer immediately the level of conformity also decreased while confirming to the right answer. So the idea of the of Solomon Asch was that based on the tendency to confirm to the group norms people have the tendency to confirm even to the wrong answer just as to continue the membership of the group. Whereas as soon as one member refused denied to confirm immediately the conformity cases also decreased and people tend to confirm to the right answer. So this is how this experiment became a classical experiment to understand the concept of group conformity in social psychology. This is a brief description that how this conformity experiment was used to understand the process of conformity which is used in line length estimation task to demonstrate the power of people in persons to confirm with other members in a small group.

And how people's tendency to confirm to the wrong answer was also increased and how the people tendency to confirm to the right answer also decreased as soon as one member refused to confirm to the wrong answer. So this was the experiment and there was some additional manipulation in the experiment which showed that participant conformity decreased when at least one individual failed to confirm but increased when the individual began confirming or withdrew from the experiment. So this is how this concept of conformity became a dominant area in the

field of social psychology. The other famous experiment was the milligram experiment which was designed to show how far people would go in obeying an authority irrespective that what can be the negative impact in obeying the law but still people have the tendency that when it is about authority then people generally have a very basic notion that they have to obey whatever is being assigned to them. So the experiment showed that normal American citizens would follow orders even when they believed that they were causing an innocent person to suffer or even apparently die.

So this is milligrams experiment. So the individual explanation for the behavior of the participant would be that it was something about them as people that caused them to obey but a more realistic explanation is that the situation they were in influenced them and caused them to behave in the way that they did. So it can be a situation also and it can be authority and when a situation is dominated by an individual then the authority becomes very much prominent in that situation that people tend to prefer to obey the authority. So some of the aspects of the situation that may have influenced their behavior include formality of the location, the behavior of the experimenter and the fact that was an experiment for which they had volunteered and had been paid. So we can say that people have the tendency to likely to follow orders given by the authority figure even to the extent of killing an innocent human being knowing what is right and wrong but still when it comes to authority people generally have this tendency to obey whatever is being imposed on them. So obedience to authority is ingrained in us all from the way we are brought up.

So this is how people tend to confirm, people tend to obey when it comes to a particular situation which is being dominated by an authority. It is about situation also and it is about authority but it is an ingrained understanding of an individual that person has to obey the authority. And the other is Bandura's Bobo doll experiment. This is another famous experiment by Bandura to explain the concept of social learning and how aggression and violence is being learned by a particular individual which fosters a particular behavior. So in this experiment Albert Bandura's Bobo doll experiment it was attempted to demonstrate how aggression is learned by imitation.

This was the most important factor in the experiment that how violence, aggression is being imitated by people in any social situation. So in this experiment 72 children were grouped based on similar levels of pre-tested aggressivity and either witnessed an aggressive or a non-aggressive actor interact with a Bobo doll. They were exposed to some movies or pictures of aggressive and non-aggressive actors for a period of time and later on they were handed over a Bobo doll, a stuffed toy that how they will react respond to the Bobo doll after watching some aggressive movie or film of an actor. And it was found that children were then placed alone in the room and it was found that they would imitate the behavior and that has been observed by those children. So it was observed that the children who had witnessed the aggressive actor imitated the behavior and proceeded to act aggressively towards the doll and both male and female children who witnessed the non-aggressive actor behaved less aggressively toward the doll.

And later boys were found to be more aggressive than the females. So this is the idea that how social learning based on imitation fosters different kind of emotions. This can be about parenting practices, this can be about what a person or even a child comes in contact with what kind of social situation and how they imitate and foster the same kind of behavior. It can be aggression, it can be non-aggression, it can be violence at the same time. So it was found that boys were found to imitate more aggressive and physical aggression while girls placed more verbal aggression.

This was also an observation that boys exhibited more physical aggression and females, girls displayed more verbal aggression. So this is another classical experiment of Bandura's Bobo doll experiment. And the last is the Shashtas classic study of cohesiveness the pitchfork productivity curves. It has talked about that when the group becomes highly cohesive people have tendency to become more close to each other then it can also have some positive impact and at the same time it can have some negative impact on group performance. So it was found that whenever a group which is highly cohesive is exposed to positive leadership styles then definitely the productivity level will go high which is very much obvious.

At the same time it was found that if any highly cohesive group is given a poor leadership we can just go back is given a poor leadership will have the lowest possible productivity which is very much obvious as there is no direction that can be offered to the group members. In both the cases the results are extreme and a highly cohesive group is analogous to a time bomb in the hands of the management. So if a group is highly cohesive then how induction in terms of leadership will use that cohesion among members in a positive direction that will define the productivity of that group. So the direction in which the highly cohesive group goes breaking production records are severely restricting output. At the same time if the group is highly cohesive it can be highly productive and at the same time if the group is highly cohesive it can have a far reaching impact in terms of zero production or restrictive output.

So the low cohesive group is much safer in the hands of the management where leadership will dominate that least cohesive group where direction is be given to every member and maximize productivity. So it must build a cohesive group and give it a proper leadership and importantly over time these highly cohesive groups may become self managing teams. So according to Shaster whenever the group becomes highly cohesive how it is being garnished with appropriate induction in terms of leadership will define the success of that group in terms of restricted output or increased productivity. So this is the case of Shaster's classic study of cohesiveness. So when we are talking about the famous experiments in social psychology about Solomon Ash, about Milligram experiment, about Bandura's Bobo doll experiment or Shaster's classic study of cohesiveness all these factors lay a very strong foundation for the applicability of social psychology in our daily life.

That what we observe in the social situation, how we interpret the information and how we deal with the situation or a person in that situation will define in understanding the human behavior in a very rationalized manner. So we are through with this discussion. I will continue with the next module in the next class. Thank you so much. Thank you.