

Concepts in social psychology: analysis



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Social Psychology

Introduction

Social psychology may be called one of the oldest sub-disciplines of psychology (Crisp & Turner, 2010). From the primary social psychological research, it has been an inseparable part of the broader discipline (Crisp & Turner, 2010). Social psychology may be perceived as having some sort of identity crisis because of too different approaches. Nevertheless, this is incorrect. Social psychology is as strong as it has ever been. This may be proved by the emergence of numerous other sub-disciplines, which have appeared around it, and have applied mainly social psychological theories and concepts (Crisp & Turner, 2010).

Social psychology is a goal-oriented sphere, which tries to realize the psychological and social needs of human beings. There are several principles that concern the practice of social psychology. These are: discovering the self, thinking about others, influencing others, relations building, and group dynamics.

Discovering the Self

In spite of the huge amount of literature on the topic of self there is still no agreement upon the clarification of it (Glaveanu). The majority of researchers try to avoid the “ unanswerable” query of what self is, and their approaches are supported more by the inherent awareness rather than precise clarifications (Glaveanu). Similar to the notion of consciousness, the

self is mentioned among those concepts, which are never precise, unified and clear-cut (Glaveanu).

The pioneering explorers in the field of self thought that the individual's experience occurs in the brain (Glaveanu). However, only the evolvement of a self forces the person to realize that the experience is their own. These days, the self has been characterized either as the place from where the individual sees the globe and acts towards it, or as an energetic and cooperative process (Glaveanu). All other clarifications are concentrated on the notion of properties or on finding operational criteria for “ searching” the existence of self (Glaveanu). Researching the self is one of the fundamental ideas of social psychology. It tries to investigate how a person sees the self within the social context. Basically, the idea is to find out how people treat themselves and their relations with other humans.

Self-concept, Awareness, and Self-schemas

Self-concept is a fundamental issue in the sub-discipline of social psychology (Boyce, 2008). It embraces two essential elements: self-structure and self-content. It relates to data, which influences humans' classification of the self (Boyce, 2008). This embraces values, beliefs, self-knowledge and self evaluation. Self-structure touches upon the way the data concerning the self is arranged (Boyce, 2008). Self-concept allows people to separate themselves from other people (Boyce, 2008).

In its turn, self-awareness is also a crucial concept in social psychology. It concerns the capability of people to separate themselves from other people and the surroundings (Myers, Abell, Kolstad, & Sani, 2010). It presupposes

awareness concerning ones' character, values, emotions, strengths and weaknesses. It influences humans' self-image and, hence, influences their feelings concerning self and other people. Inappropriate awareness of self may cause self-image, which is not a genuine depiction of a human being (Myers et al., 2010). Therefore, self-awareness has a crucial influence on human conduct and relations with other individuals. Social psychology tries to investigate aspects, which influence self-awareness, and psychologists help people in improving self-awareness (Myers et al., 2010).

Acknowledgement of the notion of self starts with the values, by which people define, who they actually are (Myers et al., 2010). These values are recognized as self-schemas and are the construction blocks, with which the character is created (Myers et al., 2010). Self-schemas are the figures, through which humans estimate themselves and other humans (Myers et al., 2010). If a person thinks that they is stout, then this idea is a schema through which he sees himself (Myers et al., 2010). He also treats other humans relatively through the same schema.

The acting self is another significant component of the detection of the self (Boyce, 2008). It is accountable for those acts, which are performed by people (Boyce, 2008). The sub-division of psychology tries to understand the elements, which drive the active self. These elements are: the external environment and the judging self. People whose deeds are impacted by the environment exhibit outer locus of control. In turn, humans, whose deeds are triggered by the judging the self exhibit inherent locus of control (Boyce, 2008).

There are two more important concepts defining the self: self-esteem and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy concerns individual's perception about their ability to perform some acts, which are required if they want to manage certain circumstances (Boyce, 2008). This concept determines how humans react on different circumstances; hence, this concept influences the human conduct (Boyce, 2008). People with a low sense of self-efficacy usually believe that different conditions are out of their control, and they try to rely on other people (Boyce, 2008).

Self-esteem concerns the level at which a person values the self (Boyce, 2008). This concept predetermines conduct and relations with other people. In its turn, it depends on how people estimate themselves (Boyce, 2008). Self-evaluation usually leads to either negative or positive self-esteem. Humans, who expose positive self-esteem, demonstrate confidence in their skills and cheerfulness (Boyce, 2008). Conversely, individuals with low self-worth demonstrate limited confidence in their skills. They care about what other people think of them (Boyce, 2008).

Thinking about Others

Social psychology also studies thinking about other people. A person's view of other people is an amazing determinant of the person's conduct and relations with others. Social psychology embraces such an important concept as attribution, which concerns the fashion in which a human being attaches meaning to the specific event or issue (Crisp & Turner, 2010). There are two major variants of attribution; internal and external. Internal type takes place when an individual associates the incidence of events with aspects, which

are within their power (Crisp & Turner, 2010). External attribution occurs when a person attributes the incidence of events to aspects, which are beyond their control (Crisp & Turner, 2010). Attribution predetermines how the person interprets the conduct of others. Hence, attribution has a crucial influence on relationship with other members of the society (Crisp & Turner, 2010).

At the same time, attitudes and behaviors influence how people perceive others (Plous, 2003). Attitude relates to an individual's manner of estimating humans or different issues. Attitudes are shaped by several aspects, such as personal observations and experiences, social norms and roles (Plous, 2003). Attitudes help people to create strong opinions concerning dissimilar issues (Plous, 2003). It embraces emotional and cognitive aspects. Emotional aspect refers to the feeling created by an issue, whilst the cognitive aspect concerns the ideas created by the issue (Plous, 2003). Attitude frequently influences behaviors in a way that sometimes human beings can change the attitudes to adapt to their behaviors (Plous, 2003).

Prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination influence interaction with others as well (Plous, 2003). Stereotype relates to image held by a person concerning a certain group of people. Stereotyping causes bias and prejudice. It relates to certain attitude towards members of a certain community due to the presence of certain stereotype (Plous, 2003). In turn, prejudice causes discrimination. Discrimination relates to positive or negative acts towards members of a certain group due to prejudice (Plous, 2008). All three concepts have crucial influence on conduct and relations (Plous, 2003).

Influencing Others: Persuasion

Social psychology also investigates how a person affects other humans. It relates to how an individual applies the power of persuasion to make others accomplish their goals. It should be mentioned that human relations mainly rely on unconscious system of give and take (Bressert, 2006). Robert B. Cialdini has been investigating the significance of persuasion in affecting social relations (Bressert, 2006). He has recognized six major principles of influence:

1. Reciprocation: one good turn deserves another.
2. Commitment and Consistency: pursue through.
3. Social Proof: when uncertain, go after the crowd.
4. Liking: trust people you like.
5. Authority: be a real member of the team, listen to professionals.
6. Scarcity: appreciate unusual (Bressert, 2006).

Hence, persuasion is the procedure during which a human being tries to stimulate people to change their behaviors and attitudes regarding some issue. In order to attract the audience the persuader has to reveal their own credibility. Humans, who are considered unreliable, cannot convince others successfully (Crisp & Turner, 2010). The person also has to expose a high degree of proficiency as people like an assurance expressed by the persuader (Crisp & Turner, 2010). The persuasion message should be precise, clear and consistent. At the same time, the listeners should also

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expose commitment to the course advanced by the persuader. Low commitment may obstruct the persuasion practice (Crisp & Turner, 2010).

Obedience and Conformity

Obedience and conformity are also crucial elements of social impact.

Conformity is an inclination of a person to presume similar values, attitudes, and behaviors as other members of the grouping he or she is attempting to fit in (Fiske, 2010). Moreover, many people will follow the group even when they have seen something different with their own eyes (Fiske, 2010).

While conformity concerns some alteration to fit into a group, obedience has more to do with the degree of authority of the human being performing the impact (Fiske, 2010). If people are considered to be the leaders, listeners are far more likely to reply to them by agreeing with the requests they make (Fiske, 2010). It may be explained by the dictatorial character of the person, it could also be due to fear of punishment if compliance is not about to happen (Fiske, 2010). Hence, obedience takes place when somebody acts in a way he does not normally act due to a leader's orders. Conformity is more interconnected with social pressure and impact, whilst obedience not merely embraces a hierarchy but is caused more by respond to a leader rather than social impact (Fiske, 2010).

As for aggressive behavior, aggression relates to behaviors, which are directed toward hurting another person. It relates to the act, which is planned to cause harm to another human being. Aggression can be either hostile or instrumental. Instrumental aggression occurs when an individual uses the aggressive behaviors in order to accomplish some goals (Crisp & <https://assignbuster.com/concepts-in-social-psychology-analysis/>

Turner, 2010). Hostile aggression takes place when the sole purpose of the aggression is to cause damage (Crisp & Turner, 2010). Aggression has social and psychological implication, which makes it a crucial subject of study in social psychology (Crisp & Turner, 2010).

Social psychology also concentrates on evolving prosocial behaviors, which are directed towards assisting other humans (Crisp & Turner, 2010). Unlike people demonstrating aggressive behavior, humans with prosocial behavior demonstrate concern for other people's rights and emotions (Crisp & Turner, 2010). Prosocial conduct is a vital aspect of human relations similar to relationship building, attraction and love.

Social psychology assists people in relations and love (Plous, 2003).

Relations are developed when one individual becomes dependent on another for some issues. Constructing relations starts with the initiation of cognitive interdependence, when people with the relationship learn about one another via interaction and exposure (Crisp & Turner, 2010). The relations proceed to the behavioral interdependence, when humans within the relationship change the behaviors of other humans (Plous, 2003). Individuals in the relations become conscious of the requirements of the other party and change the behaviors to make them in agreement with the requirements. The relations can also move on to the emotional interdependence stage that is also recognized as the familiarity stage, which is an optimistic emotional tie and sense of connectedness among humans (Plous, 2003).

Group Dynamics

Social life presupposes different groups. There are four main types of groups:

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- The intimacy group, which relates to humans, who are united by a strong emotional tie (Crisp & Turner, 2010). The first group consists of relatives, friends, and romantic relationships (Crisp & Turner, 2010).
- The task group, which relates to humans, who are united for the aim of achieving a certain task. The group embraces colleagues or schoolmates (Crisp & Turner, 2010).
- The social group: these are humans, who are united by social aspects, for instance, sex, religion, nations or race (Crisp & Turner, 2010).
- The loose association, which relates to humans united by elements that are least binding. For example, loving the same music (Crisp & Turner, 2010).

Groupthink is the inclination of a group to make decisions via consensus.

Groupthink takes place in groups, which have a strong unity, leadership and which are separated from outer influences (Crisp & Turner, 2010). One of the outcomes of groupthink is that it supports the ideas of the most dominant members of the groupings. Thoughts from the least powerful members of the groups are neglected. Groupthink can also cause loss of human identity and independence (Crisp & Turner, 2010).

In turn, social dilemmas relate to circumstances, under which the interests of a group clash with the aims of members of the groups (Plous, 2003). All members of the group obtain lower collective advantages by making choices, which favor individual gain than by making choices supporting collective gain (Plous, 2003). Maybe, in the future social psychologists will resolve this dilemma.

Future of Social Psychology

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Future tendencies of social psychology will be far more integrated because of cross-cultural studies, with better technological resources and better professional ethics. Culture, especially, multiculturalism will play a huge role in the future tendencies as it enables the psychologists to test their hypotheses over varied groups of people to realize whether the ideas apply across dissimilar nations and cultures.

Today, social psychology deals with the psychological and social issues, which are demonstrated by the existing surroundings. In the past and the present, the scientists have been driven by such issues like racism, sex, altruism, wars and HIV (Crisp & Turner, 2010). In the future, different promising issues like globalization can drive this field as it is leading to the alliance of diverse nations of the globe. This may transform the way people interact.

Advanced technology will also influence social psychology. Lately, the globe has seen amazing changes in the technology sphere. This has started to influence the way individuals live and communicate (Crisp & Turner, 2010). Social psychology can investigate the impacts of technologies. The other issues, which can create a central area of concentration in the area of social psychology, embrace terrorism, health, global warming and current and future ecological issues (Crisp & Turner, 2010).

Conclusion

Social psychology is a goal-oriented sphere that makes an attempt to recognize the social and psychological needs of humans. There are several principles concerning the practice of social psychology. These are:

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discovering the self, thinking about others, influencing others, relations building, and group dynamics.

The debates around the sphere of social psychology may force people think that it experiences an identity crisis. However, in fact, the social psychology is stronger than it has ever been before. Many different disciplines emerge on the basis of social psychology. Moreover, this discipline is at its height, and it is likely to be further accelerated by multiculturalism, technological advancement, globalization, health and environmental issues.

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