



Social Cognition

**Rajkumar
Dhubiya**

Social Cognition

- How people think about themselves and the social world, or more specifically, how people select, interpret, remember, and use social information to make judgments and decisions.

- The assumption is that people are generally trying to form accurate impressions of the world and do so much of the time.
- Because of the nature of social thinking, however, people sometimes form erroneous impressions.

- Automatic Thinking

- Quick and automatic, “without thinking,” thinking that is nonconscious, unintentional, involuntary, and effortless.

- Controlled thinking

- Is effortful and deliberate, pausing to think about self and environment, carefully selecting the right course of action.

Schemas

- Mental structures that organize our knowledge about the social world (about people, ourselves, social roles, specific events).
 - Schemas are typically very useful for helping us organize and make sense of the world and to fill in the gaps of our knowledge.
 - Schemas are particularly important when we encounter information that can be interpreted in a number of ways, because they help us reduce ambiguity.
 - Information consistent with our schemas are remembered more (e.g., perseverance effect)

Nature of Schemas

- **Self-Confirming nature of schemas**
 - **Self-fulfilling prophecies**
 - Predictions that, in a sense, make themselves come true.
 - **Behavioral confirmation**
 - A type of self-fulfilling prophecy whereby people's social expectations lead them to act in ways that cause others to confirm their expectations.
 - Do we get from others what we expect of them?

What do schemas do?

“The human mind must think with the aid of categories...orderly living depends upon it.”

--Allport, 1954

- Help us organize information
- Help us remember certain things
- Help us to fill in details when our information is incomplete
- Can influence behavior
- Help us to interpret ambiguous behavior
- Influence what information we attend to

Heuristics



Simple rules for making complex decisions or drawing inferences in a seemingly effortless manner.

Mental shortcuts/Rules of thumb

- When do we use these shortcuts
 - Lack of time for full processing
 - Information overload
 - When issues are not important
 - When we have little solid information to use in decision making

Representativeness Heuristic

- A strategy for making judgments based on the extent to which current stimuli or events resemble other stimuli or categories.
- Are these judgments accurate?

Availability Heuristic

- “If I think of it, it must be important”
- Suggests that the easier it is to bring information to mind, the greater it’s importance or relevance to our judgements or decisions.

Priming

- Increased availability of information in memory or consciousness resulting from exposure to specific stimuli or events.

Automatic Priming

- Effect that occurs when stimuli of which individuals not consciously aware alter the availability of various traits or concepts in memory.

False consensus Effect

- The tendency to assume that other behave or think as people do to a greater than is actually true.

Potential Sources of Error in Social Cognition

- Rational versus Intuitive Processing
- Dealing with Inconsistent Information
- The Planning Fallacy
- The Potential Costs of Thinking Too Much
- Counterfactual Thinking
- Magical Thinking
- Thought Suppression

Rational versus Intuitive Processing

- Going with our guts
- Cognitive Experiential Self-Theory, Epstein, 1994
 - Deliberate and intuitive thinking

The Planning Fallacy

- The tendency to make optimistic predictions concerning how long a given task will take for completion
- Also known as ‘optimistic bias’
- Why to we do this? Three factors.

The Potential Costs of Thinking Too Much

- Why, sometimes, our tendency to do as little cognitive work as possible may be justified.

Counterfactual Thinking

- How it relates to Regret
- Upward Counterfactual Thinking
- Downward Counterfactual Thinking
- Inaction Inertia
- Overall, what it results in

Magical Thinking

- Thinking involving assumptions that don't hold up to rational scrutiny—for example, the notion that things that resemble one another share fundamental properties.
- Three types of magical thinking.
- Rozin, Markwith, & Nemeroff (1992)

Thought Suppression

- Efforts to prevent certain thoughts from entering consciousness.
- How do we do this?
 - Automatic Monitoring Process
 - Operating Process
- Problems

Affect and Cognition

- How feelings shape thought and thought shapes feelings.
- Affect: Our current feelings and moods.
- Cognition: The ways in which we process, store and remember, and use social information.
- A reciprocal relationship.

The Influence of Affect on Cognition

- Affect and style of information processing we adopt.
- Affect and memory
- Affect and plans and intentions
- Mental contamination
 - Edwards and Bryan (1995)

Influence of Cognition on Affect

- Two ways we are going to talk about it
 1. Activation of schemas
 2. Cognition and emotion-provoking events

The Affect Infusion Model Forgas (1995)

- Affect influences social thought and ultimately social judgements. How?
 - Affect serves as a trigger
 - Affect as information
- When do these effects occur?

Thought Suppression

- Efforts to prevent certain thoughts from entering consciousness.

Thanks to all