

Social cognition

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.

Schema

- A schema is a cognitive framework or concept that helps organize and interpret information
- Mental structures that organize our knowledge about the social world (about people, 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.
- 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

Types of schema

- **Person schemas** are focused on specific individuals. For example, your schema for your friend might include information about her appearance, her behaviors, her personality, and her preferences.
- **Social schemas** include general knowledge about how people behave in certain social situations.
- **Self-schemas** are focused on your knowledge about yourself. This can include both what you know about your current self as well as ideas about your idealized or future self.

- **Event schemas** are focused on patterns of behavior that should be followed for certain events. This acts much like a script informing you of what you should do, how you should act, and what you should say in a particular situation.
- **Role schemas** refer to the knowledge structures people have of the norms and expected behaviors of specific role positions in society.
- Role schemas, which encompass our expectations of how a person in a specific social role will behave. For example, we expect a waiter to be warm and welcoming

- A **gender schema** can be thought of as an organized set of gender-related beliefs that influence behavior. Gender schemas are formed as a result of the children's observation of how society defines what it means to be male and female in his or her culture.
- Gender schemas help determine what the child attends to, how the child interprets the world, and what the child remembers about his or her experiences
- For example, a six-year-old boy may have a schema that contains information about which types of clothing are for girls and which types of clothing are for boys. Since dresses are for girls, the boy would refuse to wear one if presented the opportunity.

- **According to gender schema theory**, once children have formed a basic gender identity they start to develop gender schemas. **Gender schemas** are based on children's interactions and observations of others, their environment, and the culture.
- These gender schemas are used to organize and direct the child's behavior based on his or her society's gender norms and expectations related to the child's gender.

Can Schemas Be Changed

- Schemas tend to be easier to change during childhood but can become increasingly rigid and difficult to modify as people grow older. Schemas will often persist even when people are presented with evidence that contradicts their beliefs
- **Assimilation** – The process of taking in new information into our previously existing schema's is known as assimilation
- **Accommodation** – Another part of adaptation involves changing or altering our existing schemas in light of new information, a process known as accommodation

- People who base their success on their own work and believe they control their life have an **internal locus of control**.
- In contrast, people who attribute their success or failure to outside influences have an **external locus of control**.
- For example, let's say you're a person with an internal locus of control and you get a promotion at work or achieve some other type of success. You will probably attribute that positive end result to the work you put in. In other words, your success was a direct result of your hard work.

- If, on the other hand, you have an external locus of control, you might attribute that promotion or success to external or environmental factors, such as luck, fate, timing, other people or some type of divine intervention.
- Let's use the same example and say that you were denied a promotion. If your locus of control is internal, you would find a way to blame yourself for the perceived failure. If your locus of control is external, it would be easy, even natural, to blame outside sources beyond your control

Heuristics

- A **heuristic** is a mental shortcut that helps us make decisions and judgments quickly without having to spend a lot of time researching and analyzing information.

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

Types of heuristics

Representativeness

Estimating the probability of an event by comparing it to existing knowledge.

Availability Heuristic

judging the likelihood of an event by ease with which relevant instances come to mind.

Anchoring and adjustment Heuristic

judging the likelihood of an event by using a starting point and adjusting from that point.

Automatic and controlled processing

- Every day, we are presented with thousands of pieces of information. Every place we go, every person we meet, and everything we do brings us into contact with new data that we must interpret, analyze, and potentially use. These functions are part of what we call **processing**.
- There are two ways in which we process information. They are called controlled processing and automatic processing

Controlled processing

Requires us to pay attention and deliberately put in effort. Controlled processing is intentionally done while we are consciously aware of what we are doing.

- In other words, we actually have to think about what is going on and make decisions. We are in 'control' of these processes.
- For example, when we first learned how to ride a bike, we had to pay attention to what we were doing. We had to be consciously aware of where the brakes were, where the pedals are located, how to stop, how to steer the bike, etc.

Automatic processing

does not require us to pay attention, nor do we have to deliberately put in effort to control automatic processes.

- Automatic processing occurs without us giving much thought to it. If we practice something long enough, it becomes automatic.
- For example, as an experienced bike rider, you may be able to do many bike-riding tasks (i.e. shifting the gears of the bike, braking, and steering) automatically without giving it much thought. You can steer, brake, react to cars on the road, and change speeds because all of the years of practice have made it possible for you to do these things automatically without being consciously aware of what you are doing.

Difference between automatic and controlled processing

- As previously mentioned, it takes time and practice to develop automatic processing. Think of how long it takes to become an experienced car driver or how long it takes people to become skilled in playing the piano.
- Controlled processing can be established much sooner and under a variety of circumstances. All you have to do is pay attention and be aware of what you are doing, and controlled processing will happen

Controlled	Automatic
low Response	Fast Response
Attention Demanding	Not Attention Demanding
Effortful	Effortless
Easily Disrupted	Not Easily Disrupted
Occur in Amygdala	Occur in prefrontal cortex

- Social cognitive theory is a learning theory based on the idea that people learn by observing others.
- These learned behaviors can be central to one's personality. While social psychologists agree that the environment one grows up in contributes to behavior, the individual person (and therefore cognition) is just as important.
- People learn by observing others, with the environment, behavior, and cognition acting as primary factors that influence development in a reciprocal triadic relationship. Each behavior witnessed can change a person's way of thinking (cognition).

- Observational learning occurs through a sequence of four processes
- **Attention processes** account for the information that is selected for observation in the environment. People might select to observe real-life models or models they encounter via media.
- **Retention processes** involve remembering the observed information so it can be successfully recalled and reconstructed later.

- **Production processes** reconstruct the memories of the observations so what was learned can be applied in appropriate situations. In many cases, this doesn't mean the observer will replicate the observed action exactly, but that they will modify the behavior to produce a variation that fits the context.
- **Motivational processes** If an observed behavior was rewarded, the observer will be more motivated to reproduce it later. However, if a behavior was punished in some way, the observer would be less motivated to reproduce it. Thus, social cognitive theory cautions that people don't perform every behavior they learn through modeling.

- **Situation specific sources of error**

- **counterfactual thinking** : what might have been . The tendency to think about other outcomes than what has occurred .

magical thinking : Thinking involves assumptions that do not follow a rationale e.g. Fundamental traits / properties are shared by similar things

thought suppression: Efforts to prevent certain thoughts from entering our mind Keep out unwanted thoughts prevention system gets activated

terror management : Thinking about unsettling outcomes of imaginary or real threats / entities / occurrences . E.g. belief in Supernatural

Perceptual constancy

- The phenomenon in which physical objects are perceived as unvarying and consistent despite changes in their appearance or in the physical environment .

OR

- Perceptual constancy leads us to view objects as having an unvarying size, shape, color, and brightness, even if the image on our retina varies.

1. Size constancy

- Refers to our ability to see objects as maintaining the same size even when our distance from them makes things appear larger or smaller.
- Example
- As we walk away from radio, the song appears to get softer. We understand/perceive it as being just as loud as before.

2. Brightness constancy

- Refers to our ability to recognize that color remains the same regardless of how it looks under different level of light.
- Example
- That deep blue shirt you wore to the beach suddenly looks black when you walk indoors.

2. Shape constancy

- Refers to our ability to see objects as maintaining the same shape even when we see them from different angles.

Example

- Everybody has seen a plate shaped in the form of a circle. When we see that same plate from an angle, however, it looks more like an ellipse. Shape constancy allows us to perceive that plate as still being a circle even though the angle from which we view it appears to distort the shape.