Social Cognition

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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

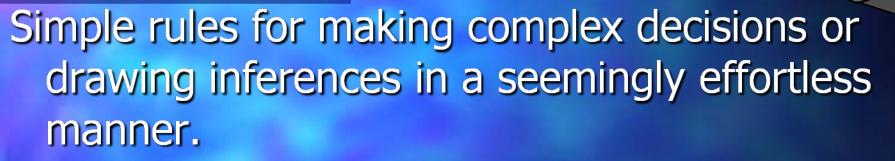
- A type of self-fulfilling prophecy whereby people's social expectations lead them to act in ways that cause others to confirm their expectations.
- Do we get from others what we expect of them?

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





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?

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Thanks to all