

# Topic 1 – Social Cognition and Social Influence

1. Understand the context, purpose and research focusses of social psychology, role of social psychologists, and research methods utilised in social psychology.
2. Appreciate the processes involved in forming impressions of other people, the type of information influencing these processes, and biases that may be involved.
3. Describe phenomena such as social schemas/scripts and schema formation, the concept of categories and prototypes, and appreciate the process/purpose of categorisation and stereotyping.
4. Appreciate the process of social encoding, factors that influence people’s attention, and how memory for people works.
5. Understand the processes and biases involved in social inference, the role of heuristics, and the relationship between affect and social cognition.
6. Explain the various types of social influence and factors influencing compliance, obedience to authority, and conformity.
7. Describe the theories underlying minority influence and social change.

Social cognition focuses on how cognition is affected by wider and more immediate social contexts and how cognition affects out social behaviour

## How do we form an impression of other people

### Schemas

- A schema is a cognitive structure that represents knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus, which allows us to quickly make sense of a person or situation
- Types of schemas: social, person, role, content-free, script, self
- Categories
  - Prototype
  - Exemplar
  - Associative network

### Stereotypes

- Accentuation principle: accentuation on intra-category similarities and inter-category differences; especially when categorisation is (1) important and (2) people are uncertain
- Beyond accentuation: stereotypes stay stable if they (1) fit reality and (2) people are motivated to keep them

Stereotype content model (Fiske)

		Competence	
		Low	High
Warmth	High	<b>Paternalistic stereotype</b> low status, not competitive (e.g., housewives, elderly people, disabled people)	<b>Admiration</b> high status, not competitive (e.g., ingroup, close allies)
	Low	<b>Contemptuous stereotype</b> low status, competitive (e.g., welfare recipients, poor people)	<b>Envious stereotype</b> high status, competitive (e.g., Asians, Jews, rich people, feminists)

## How we use, acquire and change schemas

Which schemas do we use

- Basic-level categories that are neither too inclusive (e.g., woman) nor too exclusive (e.g., lawyer)
- Social stereotypes (e.g., politician) rather than trait schemas (e.g., intelligent)
- Schemas that are readily detectable (e.g., skin colour) or contextually distinctive
- Schemas that are accessible and important for us (e.g., racist)
- Schemas that are mood-congruent (e.g., happy) and based on earlier info (i.e., primacy effect)
- If motivated to be accurate or potentially big consequences => data-driven cognition
- Not much time, distraction, anxiety => more schema use
- Individual differences: (1) attributional complexity; (2) uncertainty orientation; (3) need for cognition; (4) need for cognitive closure; (5) cognitive complexity; (6) schema about ourselves; (7) chronic accessibility of schemas

How do we acquire schemas

- Second-hand v personal experience
- More experience => more abstract, richer => more organised => more compact => more resilient => more accurate

How do we change schemas

- Schemas do not easily change; we ignore or interpret information that does not fit with schema
- However there are 3 ways a schema can change
  1. Bookkeeping - schemas changes slowly if there is accumulating evidence to the contrary
  2. Conversion - sudden change if critical mass of disconfirming evidence is reached
  3. Subtyping - sub-category to accommodate disconfirming evidence