
SOCIAL COGNITION

Refers to the ways in which people think about themselves and the social world

How people select, interpret, remember and use social information.

Two types of social cognition;

- Automatic thinking
- Controlled thinking;

AUTOMATIC THINKING

Thinking is nonconscious, unintentional, involuntary and effortless.

Based on our past experiences and knowledge of the world

People use schemas to organize knowledge about the social world around themes or subjects

Types of automatic thinking;

- Automatic goal pursuit;
 - o Priming with religious words → more generous
- Automatic decision making;
 - o Choosing the best apartment
- Automatic thinking and metaphors about the body and mind;
 - o Smelling something clean → more trusting to strangers
- Mental strategies and shortcuts – judgmental heuristics;
 - o Mental shortcuts people use to make judgements quickly and efficiently;
 - Availability heuristic vs representative heuristic
 - People often don't use base rate information which can lead to a faulty conclusion

Cultural differences in social cognition;

- Western cultures;
 - o Analytic style thinking;

- People focus on the properties of objects without considering their surrounding context
- East Asian cultures;
 - Holistic style thinking;
 - People focus on the overall context, particularly the ways in which objects relate to each other

CONTROLLED THINKING

Controlled thinking is thinking that is conscious, intentional, voluntary and effortful

SCHEMAS

Mental structures that organize our knowledge about the social world.

Social schemas;

- 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

Korsakov's syndrome – life without schemas;

- People who lose the ability to form new memories
- Must approach every situation as if they were encountering it for the first time

Accessibility;

- The extent to which schemas and concepts are at the forefront of people's minds and are therefore likely to be used when making judgments about the social world
- Three main reasons for schemas being accessible;
 - Chronic accessibility due to past experiences;
 - Have a mentally ill person in our family so see a crazy person on a bus and assume mental illness
 - Can be temporarily accessible due to recent experiences – primes;
 - We were drunk on the weekend so the man on the bus is drunk, not mentally ill
 - Related to a current goal;
 - Studying for an exam on mental illness so the crazy man is mentally ill

Priming;

- The process by which recent experiences increase the accessibility of a schema, trait, or concept

Self-fulfilling prophecy;

- The case wherein people have an expectation about what another person is like, which influences how they act toward that person, which causes that person to behave consistently with people's original expectations, making the expectations come true

Judgmental heuristics;

- Mental shortcuts people use to make judgments quickly and efficiently
- Availability heuristic;
 - o A mental rule of thumb whereby people base a judgment on the ease with which they can bring something to mind
 - o Sometimes can lead to a faulty conclusion if what easily comes to mind is not an accurate representation
- Representativeness heuristic
 - o A mental shortcut whereby people classify something according to how similar it is to a typical case

CONFORMITY AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Conformity is a change in behaviour due to the real or imagined influence of other people

People conform because;

- They don't know how to act in a confusing or unusual situation
- Behaviour of others serves as a cue to how to respond
- They don't want to be ridiculed or punished
- They want to be accepted by the group

Informational social influence;

- Relying on other people as a source of information to guide our behavior
- Private acceptance;
 - o Conforming to other people's behavior out of a genuine belief that what they are doing or saying is right
- Public compliance;