

THINK



Social Cognition –
Thinking about the Social World

Social Cognition

- Social Cognition is defined as -

- “The study of mental processes involved in perceiving, attending to, remembering, thinking about, and making sense of the people in our social world”

(Moscowitz, 2005, p.3)

- How we think about the social world
- Our attempts to understand it
- Ourselves and our place in it

Some Concepts

- **Schema** – Mental frameworks centering on a specific theme that help us to organize social information.
- **Prototypes**- Summary of the common attributes possessed by members of a category. ***Best Exemplars***
- **Heuristics** - Simple rules for making complex decisions or drawing inferences in a rapid manner and seemingly effortless manner.

Schemas- Organising Social Information

- Schemas

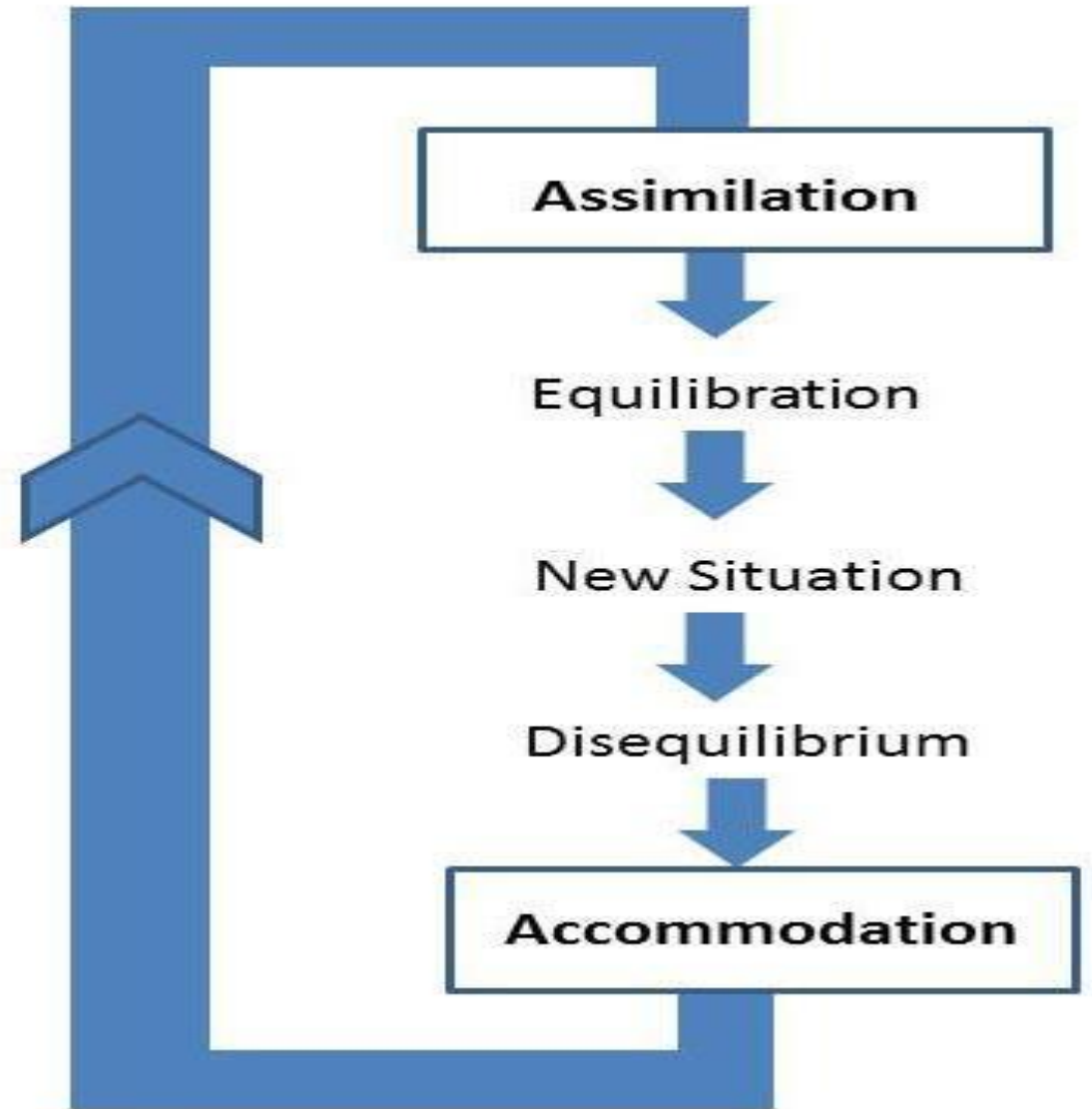
- Cognitive frameworks
- Automatically created
- Guide us to understanding the world
- Can exist for people, places, events, or other stimuli

- Schemas are formed on the basis of experience

- Cognitive Development Theory - Jean Piaget

Formation of Schemas

- Jean Piaget used following key concepts to explain how cognitive development occurs:
 - Schema
 - Assimilation
 - Accommodation
 - Equilibrium



Schema



- A cognitive structure that is used to used to identify and process information
- It operates like a mental index file where each index card represents a different category (or schema) of information
- Once acquired, individual schemas (or categories) can be accessed for future reference.

Assimilation



- The cognitive process that occurs when a child uses an existing schema to classify a new stimulus (or piece of information)
- This process influences the growth of an individual schema but it does not change schema

Accommodation

- The process allows a child to modify an existing schema to accommodate a new stimulus (or piece of information)
- If modification does not work, the child will create a new schema

Equilibrium

- Piaget used this term to describe the rapid mental process that occurs when assimilation and accommodation work together to create increasingly more adequate schemas for the understanding of the world
- This mental process suggests a steady and comfortable state

Impact of Schemas on Social Cognition

Social Cognition and Memory

- **Attention** refers to what information we notice.

Filter: information inconsistent with them is more likely to be noticed and to enter our consciousness.

- **Encoding** refers to the processes through which information we notice gets stored in memory.

Information that is inconsistent with our schemas that is encoded and stored in long-term memory

- **Retrieval** refers to the processes through which we recover information from memory in order to use it in some manner

Information consistent with our schema is readily remembered.

Types of Schemas

- **Object Schemas** - Object schemas inform our understanding of what various objects are
- **Stereotypes** - A stereotype describes a set of characteristics that a person associates with a group of people
- **Script** - Activities and specific occasions often follow a particular schedule of events. We know that a wedding tends to involve a ceremony
- **Role Schema** - People tend to hold common expectations of how a person in a particular role should behave.
- **Self Schema** - Self schemas refer to the way in which we perceive ourselves.

Schema Persistence

- Why Even Discredited Schemas Can Sometimes Influence Our Thought and Behavior ?
- **Perseverance Effect** – The tendency for beliefs and schemas to remain unchanged even in the face of contradictory information.
- Schemas can be self-fulfilling
- **Self-fulfilling Prophecy** – is a prediction that directly or indirectly causes itself to become true, by the very terms of the prophecy itself, due to positive feedback between belief and behavior.
- They influence our responses to the social world in ways that make it consistent with the schema.

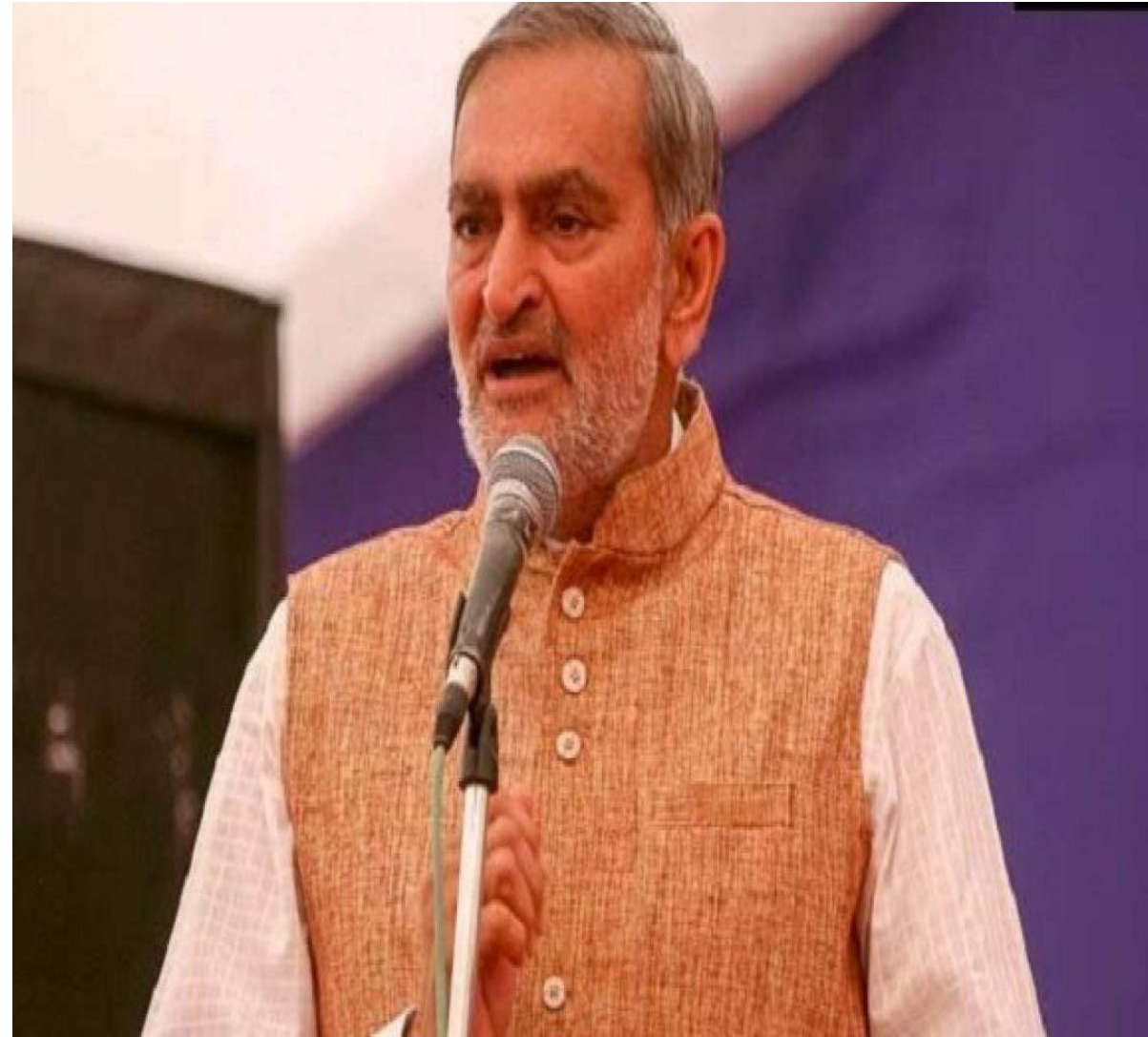
Heuristics

- Simple rules for making complex decisions or drawing inferences in a rapid manner and seemingly effortless manner.
- Mental Short-cuts
- Social thoughts occurs to be automatic is due to heuristics.
- **Need of Heuristics**
 - 1. Information overload
 - 2. Saving on resources

Types of Heuristics

- **Prototype** - summary of the common attributes possessed by members of a category.

1. Representativeness Heuristics - A strategy for making judgments based on the extent to which current stimuli or events resemble other stimuli or categories.



2. Availability: “If I Can Retrieve Instances, Must Be Frequent”

- A strategy for making judgments on the basis of how easily specific kinds of information can be brought to mind.



3. Anchoring and Adjustment: Where You Begin Makes a Difference

- A heuristic that involves the tendency to use a number of value as a starting point to which we then make adjustments.



- Schemas:

Play a very important role in many forms of social interactions:
Attitude, Stereotypes (Prejudice & discrimination) etc.

Suggestive Readings

Baron & Branscombe - Social Psychology (13th ed.) Pearson
Chapter – 2 Social Cognition