

# SOCIAL COGNITION

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LUCKNOW

# COGNITION

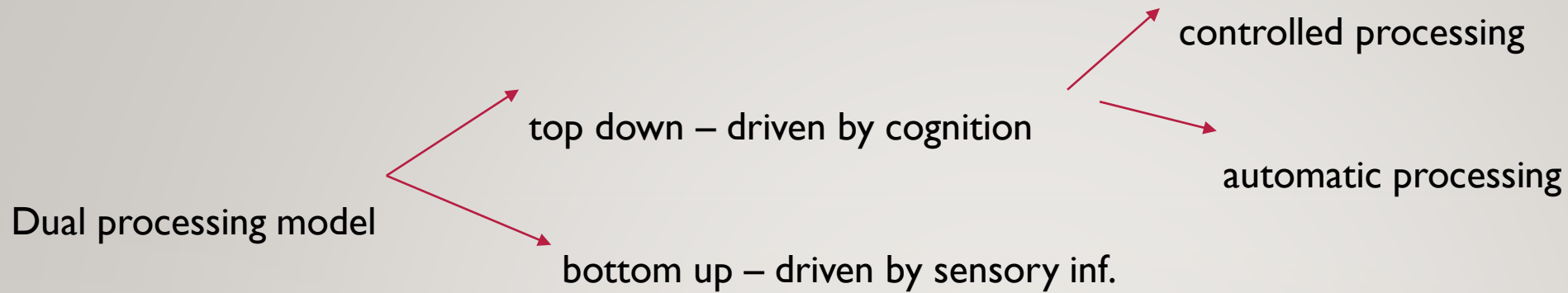
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- Thinking and higher mental processes
- APA – cognition is defined as the processes of knowing including attention, remembering and reasoning
- Cognitive psychology – refers to the study of the mind and how we think
  - Structure of the brain reasoning
  - Functioning of the brain problem solving
  - Memory decision making

# SOCIAL COGNITION

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- ❖ Is defined as a cognitive process that **involves other people**
- ❖ involves thoughts about **others and about self** in relation to others
- ❖ the process through which we **notice, store, remember** and later use the social information
- ❖ the mental activity that relates to social activities and help us to meet the goal of **understanding and predicting the behaviour of others and ourselves**
- ❖ ROBERT BARON – social cognition concerns how we think about the social world, our attempt to understanding complex issues and why we sometimes are **less than optimally rational**



Our **thinking** about the social world operates upon

- 1) **CONTROLLED PROCESSING** – systematic , logical, careful and highly effortful eg attribution
- 2) **AUTOMATIC PROCESSING** - fast, relatively effortless and intuitive manner eg heuristic, schema

### **WHY ARE WE SOMETIMES OPTINALLY IRRATIONAL**

because we want to **draw quick inferences** about the social situation

# WHAT PROCESSES WE USE FOR MAKING QUICK INFERENCES ABOUT SOCIAL SITUATIONS I. HEURISTIC

## 2. SCHEMA

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- **HEURISTIC** – HOW WE EMPLOY **SIMPLE RULES** IN SOCIAL COGNITION
- “ heuristic is a **mental shortcut** that allows people to solve problems and make judgements / **decisions quickly** and efficiently”
- “ **simple rules** for making complex **decisions or drawing inferences in a quick** and effective manner”
- Heuristic are flexible techniques for making **quick decisions**
- **Information processing rule of thumb** that enables us to think in ways that are quick and easy but at times lead to error
- HERBERT SIMON “ although people strive to make rational decisions ( controlled processing), they also make subjective and irrational decisions

# WHY WE RELY ON HEURISTICS

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- 1) **EFFORT REDUCTION** – reduce the mental effort to make decisions thoughtfully- cognitive laziness
- 2) **ATTRIBUTION SUBSTITUTION** – finding the cause of behavior is a difficult decision making process, so people substitute with simpler processes
- 3) **QUICK DECISIONS** – sometimes we have to make quick decisions so we rely on mental shortcuts
- 4) **INFORMATION OVERLOAD** – then world is fully of information, but our brain is capable of processing limited information. Any input beyond our limit puts us into a state of “information overload”, where the demand on our cognitive system is greater than our capacity ie heuristics helps to reduce cognitive load

# TYPES

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- AMOS TVERSKY AND DANIEL KAHENEMANN 1970's gave three types of heuristics
- 1. availability heuristic
- 2. representative heuristic
- 3. anchoring and adjustment heuristic
- 4. counterfactual thinking

# AVAILABILITY HEURISTIC – HOW QUICKLY DOES IT COME TO MIND ? THEY MUST BE FREQUENT

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- Availability heuristic is based on a judgement on the **ease /effortless** with which you can bring something ( information ) to mind.
- Which information comes easily to our mind? Information which we frequently use
- “The availability heuristic is a mental shortcut that leads us to draw conclusion based on what comes to our mind immediately”. This means that when we make a decision we rely on things that we can **recall quickly** and things we have **already seen or experienced**
- Study by Tversky and Kahneman- think about how many words that start with letter K compared to number of words with K s the third letter. Twice as many people thought of k occurring at the beginning of the word
- When it is very hot we blame it on global warming why?
- Social media
- **How does it work** – when we are making a decision about people a number of related events and situations come to our mind, from our past experiences
- **Greater the frequency (how easily the information comes to our mind) of the information higher the availability heuristic (higher the impact on our decision making)**



# REPRESENTATIVE HEURISTIC – JUDGING BY RESEMBLANCE ,HOW SIMILAR IS A TO B

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Making quick judgement on **mental prototype**

A mental shortcut whereby people classify something to **how similar** it is to a typical case /standard with which we compare – **PROTOTYPE**

- **We make our decisions about people on how well he fits in the prototype. Prototype is build on our past experiences**
- **The representative heuristic is the tendency for people to predict that a person belongs to a category, based on how much the person is perceived to be representative of that category.**
- **Book Tversky and Kahneman Judgement Under Uncertainty : Heuristic and Biases**
- **Exp - Tom W**

group A- base rate group  
Group B –similarity group  
Group C – prediction group

Exp – taxicab problem

We have already made prototype of people from our past experiences. When we have to make a quick decision we rely on our prototype

Eg Susan is very shy and withdrawn, invariably helpful, but with little interest in people or in the world of reality  
Is Susan a librarian , a teacher or a lawyer



# ANCHORING AND ADJUSTMENT HEURISTIC – WHERE TO BEGIN MAKES A DIFFERENCE

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- A mental shortcut that involves using a **number or value** as a starting point known as anchor and then adjust that information until an acceptable value is reached over time
- Where people start with an initial idea and then adjusts their idea based on the starting point .Anchoring relies on facts provided before making a decision – suggestions, heard or read.The initial anchor value may be unrealistic, irrelevant, overestimated or underestimated
- Eg bargaining , agreement
- Eg when we know that some action is wrong .....let me try once
- Eg suppose a person is trying to quit smoking, he is sitting with a group of friends who are smoking ..... what might happen

# COUNTERFACTUAL THINKING – MENTALLY UNDOING THE PAST

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- “ the ease with which we can mentally **reconstruct the past**”
- “mentally **changing** some aspect of the past”
- “the ease with which we can mentally **undo the past**”
- This is often the case in “ if only.....” situation, where we wish something had or had not happened. Moreover it is associated with complex emotions – negative - guilt, regret and blame, positive – helps to cope with future problems.
- Sometimes counterfactual thinking revolves around **how the present should be different**
- More frequently, counterfactual thinking revolves around **how the past could have been different**
- After a viva or interview “ I should have said this.....”

Researchers distinguish 2 types of counterfactual thinking

1. **UPWARD COUNTERFACTUAL THINKING** – are thoughts how the situation might have turned out **better**

eg a driver who caused an accident – “only if I had done this..... to avoid the accident”

Athlete – only if I had run little faster.....I could have got a gold medal

only if I could have studied more .....I could have got a first division

**People imagine better outcome**

2, **DOWNWARD COUNTERFACTUAL THINKING** – are thoughts how a situation might have turned out **worse**

eg a driver who caused an accident – “if I had been driving faster I might be dead”

Athlete – at least I got a bronze medal

At least I passed

**People imagine of the worse outcome**

## **WHEN DO PEOPLE ENGAGE IN COUNTERFACTUAL THINKING**

1. After a problematic situation or negative emotion
2. After a “near miss”
3. “if only” terms

