

## Beliefs and Judgments



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## Social Cognition



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## Beliefs



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## Beliefs =



- Mental structures that organize our knowledge of the social world
- Example: Classroom and student schemas
- Functions
  - Relate the present to the past
  - Make sense of unfamiliar stimuli
  - Conserves mental energy
  - *Provide security when threatened*

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## Belief Activation After Threat



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## Schemas Distort Our Perceptions



- Hastorf & Cantril (1954)
- 1951 Princeton-Dartmouth Football Game
  - Equal number of infractions from either team
  - Students asked to count the number of infractions and who was responsible
  - What happened?

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## Types of Processing



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- Nonconscious and effortless processing
  - based on well-practiced thoughts
- Pros
  - Reduces cognitive energy
- Con
  - Hasty, inaccurate conclusions
  - Example: Gun or cell phone experiment



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- Conscious, effortful thinking
- Pro
  - More accurate, situation-specific thinking
- Con
  - Requires mental energy
  - People are **cognitive misers**



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Process by which one's expectations about another person eventually lead the other person to behave in ways that confirm the belief

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### Three Steps to



- Perceiver has expectations about how the target will behave
- Perceiver then behaves in a way that elicits expected behavior from target
- Perceiver sees predicted behavior

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### Examples of



- Rosenthal & Jacobson (1968)
  - Teacher expectations of "smart" students
- Snyder, Tanke & Bersheid (1977)
  - Talking to a hottie or not
- Word, Zanna & Cooper (1974)
  - White employers, Black/White interviewers

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## Constructing Memories



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Incorporating information into one's memory  
after witnessing an event and receiving  
misleading information about it



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## Judgments



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## Judgmental Heuristics



- Mental shortcuts we use to make judgments quickly and efficiently
- Heuristics are for quick judgments just as schemas are for quick beliefs

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People base their judgments on the ease with which something can be brought to mind



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People classify something according to how similar it seems to a typical case



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- Mental shortcut that involves using a value as a starting point and adjusting away from that anchor
- Ex. Infomercial starting price

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