



# Social Cognition - Models

Pawel Ziemianski, Ph.D.

# Social Cognition deals with our knowledge about the social world





# Social Cognition - Schemata

- ▶ Cognitive schema is defined as the organization of knowledge related to previous experience with a class of events, people, or objects (Wojciszke, 2006).
- ▶ It is used to store knowledge and to guide the comprehension of reality.
- ▶ Classical research on schemata has proved that human memory is reconstructive and its content is changed in time.
  
- ▶ Example – Bartlett and „War of the ghosts” study



# Schemata example - Script

- ▶ 'Script is a representation of a sequence of actions and interrelations between them. For example, a mental representation of an exam at a university, stored in memory is a script.
- ▶ It includes specific actors of this situation, their typical behavior, and surroundings.
- ▶ The development of scripts allows to function in the social context, and at the same affects the memory.



# Schemata example - Stereotype

- ▶ Stereotypes are also schemata. They fulfill different functions (Fiske, 1993), including:
  - A. The descriptive function – they allow people to understand the social reality
  - B. The prescriptive function – they indicate how people belonging to different social categories should behave
  - C. They serve as a justification of the social order






# Attribution – the important process of explaining the reasons behind actions and events

- ▶ Major distinction is the one between external and internal attributions.
- ▶ The former pertains to the situation, and the latter to a person's characteristics
- ▶ People quite often produce self-serving attributions which allow them to sustain high self-esteem



# Attribution – the Kelley's covariation model

- ▶ 'Kelley claimed that there are three important factors that affect attribution's outcome:
  - 'Consensus - whether the same attitude or action is displayed by many people (high consensus) or just a few (low consensus)
  - 'Distinctiveness – the differences in individual's behavior across different situations – also they can be high or low
  - 'Consistency – in the case of high consistency behavior is the same over time, with the low consistency it changes



# Hewstone and Jaspar and combinations of three factors - examples

- ▶ High Consensus, Low Distinctiveness, Low Consistency:

Many people compliment Anna, Mark compliments only Anna, Mark compliments Anna this one time

Circumstance attribution – its a special occasion when things like that happen´

- ▶ High Consensus, High Distinctiveness, High Consistency:

Many people compliment Anna, Mark compliments only Anna, Mark compliments Anna all the time

Stimulus attribution – Anna is a special person

- ▶ Low Consensus, Low Distinctiveness, High Consistency:

Few people compliment Anna, Mark also compliments other women, Mark compliments Anna all the time

Personal attribution – Mark is a person who enjoys complimenting





# People recognize two major categories of characteristics when judging others – Communion and Agency

- ▶ Abele and Wojciszke (2014) called them „The big two in social judgment and behavior”
- ▶ Agency refers to goal-achievement and task-related functioning (competence, assertiveness, decisiveness),
- ▶ Communion refers to developing relationships and social functioning (helpfulness, benevolence, trustworthiness).



# Communion and Agency

## 3 confirmed principles Abele and Wojciszke (2014)

1. Communion is in general the primary category
2. When perceiving others, communal content receives more weight than agentic content.
3. When thinking about oneself, agentic content receives more weight than communal content.



# Theory of mind – an interesting phenomenon related to social cognition

- ▶ Theory of mind is the ability to infer other people's mental states
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGSj2zY2OEM>
- ▶ The development of Theory of mind during life-span has been examined
- ▶ Also researchers were interested in its deficits among for example people with autism (e.g. Baron-Cohen et al., 1999)
  
- ▶ „She thinks that he did not believe her after considering what intentions the other person might have had.”



# The Implicit Social Cognition (e.g. Greenwald, Lai, 2020)

- ▶ The implicit models of social cognition assume that
  - ▶ People do not need to be aware of attitudes, stereotypes, identities, self-concepts, and self-esteem
  - ▶ They can be measured indirectly

An interesting example is the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald et al., 1998)

You can take the test here:

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>