

The Lecture Contains:

- ☰ Social Cognition
- ☰ Schemas and prototypes
- ☰ Person schemas
- ☰ Role schemas
- ☰ Scripts
- ☰ Schemas and information processing
- ☰ Relationship between prototypes and behaviour

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Social Cognition

- Baron and Byrne (1997) define social cognition as “The manner in which we interpret, analyze, remember, and use information about the social world” (p. 76). The two important social psychological concepts that help us understand how cognize the social world in this manner are schema and prototypes. This lecture is devoted to these two conepts.

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Schemas and prototypes

- Schema are defined as the mental frameworks constituted of information pertaining to certain situations or events that help us interpret the nature of and happenings in those situations.
 - For example, the schema of a class in physics tells the students about the nature of topics, the manner of teaching by the teacher, and usual level of interest a student might be having in such classes.
 - Social psychologists have noted three different kinds of schema used by people: person schemas, role schemas and scripts.
- Prototypes is defined as the mental frameworks of the qualities one usually assigns to a group of a category.
 - For example, the prototypes for sports clubs in India could be that those are places only meant for wealthy people who have the luxury to having a substantial amount of money to be spent monthly on them.

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Person schemas

- Person schemas are the mental frameworks that help one link the trait and behaviour of a person. For example, person schemas for 'helpful' persons may include the information that these are the people who would listen to you rather than simply making you listen to them.

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Role schemas

- Role schemas include the mental frameworks about the behaviour of the people carrying out certain kinds of role. For example, the role schemas for a housewife may include taking utmost care of household activities and shouldering the responsibility of nurturing the children.

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Scripts

- Scripts are the schemas associated with the sequence of events in a situation. For example, a member of a Cricket team would expect the captain to behave in certain way when he or she is not able to take a wicket or scores a half-century in the difficult moments of the match.

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Schemas and information processing

- Attention, encoding and retrieval are the three pillars of information processing involved in cognitive processes. Social psychologists have shown that schemas influence these three processes in the following manner :
 - Information inconsistent with the schemas are paid more attention to by a person.
 - When the schema are getting formed, the information inconsistent with the these are encoded or remembered better. But, when the schemas are well-established, it is the information consistent with these that are better remembered.
 - When the schemas are activated, these help in the better recall of the information encoded.

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Relationship between prototypes and behaviour

- In an interesting study, Gibbons, Gerrard, & McCoy (1995) developed some insights into how prototypes shape behaviours of people.
 - In their study, they showed that the (a) the favourability (that such boys and girls engaging in teenage sex are sophisticated, popular, intelligent etc.) of the prototypes of teenage girls who get pregnant and the boys who get them pregnant, and (b) the perceived similarity to these prototypes were strongly associated with the reported willingness of the participants to engage in unprotected sex.

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