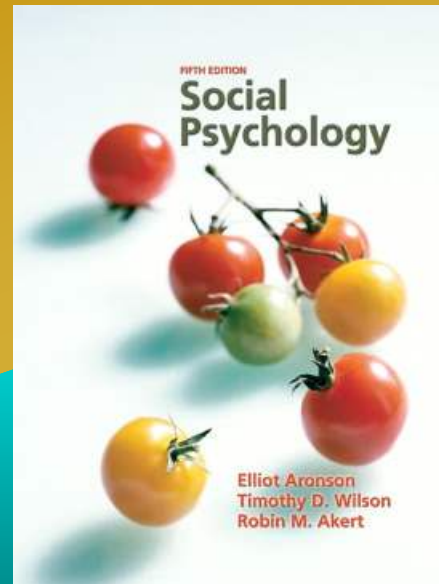


# Chapter 3

## Social Cognition: How We Think About the Social World



Aronson Social Psychology, 5/e  
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# **PowerPoint Presentation**

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# Chapter Outline

## I. On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking

# **On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking**

**Social cognition is the study of how people select, interpret, and use information to make judgments about themselves and the social world.**

# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking

**People use mental shortcuts to simplify the amount of information they receive from the environment.**

# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking

***Automatic thinking*** is thinking that is nonconscious, unintentional, involuntary and effortless.

# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking

- **People as Everyday Theorists:  
Automatic Thinking with Schemas**

***Schemas*** are mental structures people use to organize their knowledge about the social world around themes or subjects: schemas affect what information we notice, think about, and remember.

# **On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking**

- **People as Everyday Theorists:  
Automatic Thinking with Schemas**

**Schemas act as filters, screening out information that is inconsistent with them. Although we may notice and remember glaring exceptions, usually we attend only to schema-consistent information.**



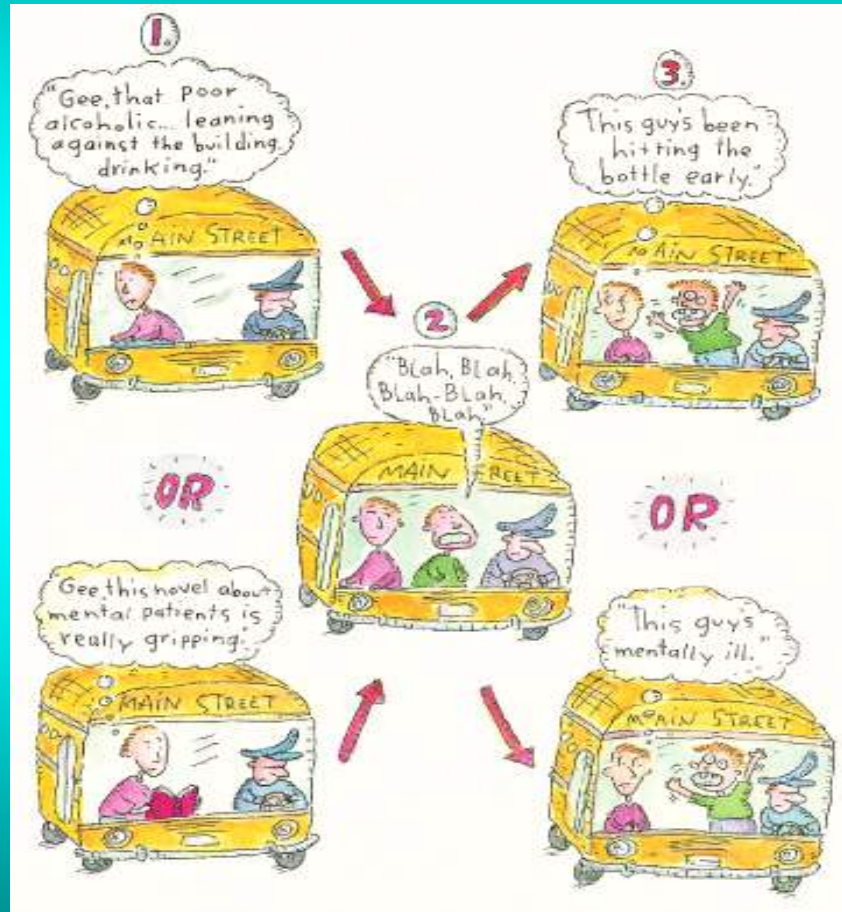
# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking

- **People as Everyday Theorists: Automatic Thinking with Schemas**

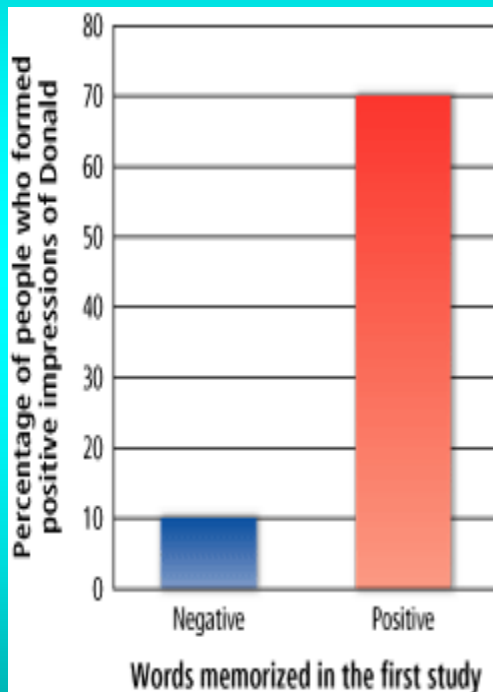
***Accessibility***: the ease with which schemas can be brought to mind.

***Priming***: the process by which recent experiences make schemas, traits, or concepts come to mind more readily.

# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking



# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking



## Description of Donald

Donald spent a great deal of time in his search of what he liked to call excitement. He had already climbed Mt. McKinley, shot the Colorado rapids in a kayak, driven in a demolition derby, and piloted a jet-powered boat—without knowing very much about boats. He had risked injury, and even death, a number of times. Now he was in search of new excitement. He was thinking, perhaps, he would do some skydiving or maybe cross the Atlantic in a sailboat. By the way he acted one could readily guess that Donald was well aware of his ability to do many things well. Other than business engagements, Donald's contacts with people were rather limited. He felt he didn't really need to rely on anyone. Once Donald made up his mind to do something it was as good as done no matter how long it might take or how difficult the going might be. Only rarely did he change his mind even when it might well have been better if he had.

# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking

- **People as Everyday Theorists:  
Automatic Thinking with Schemas**

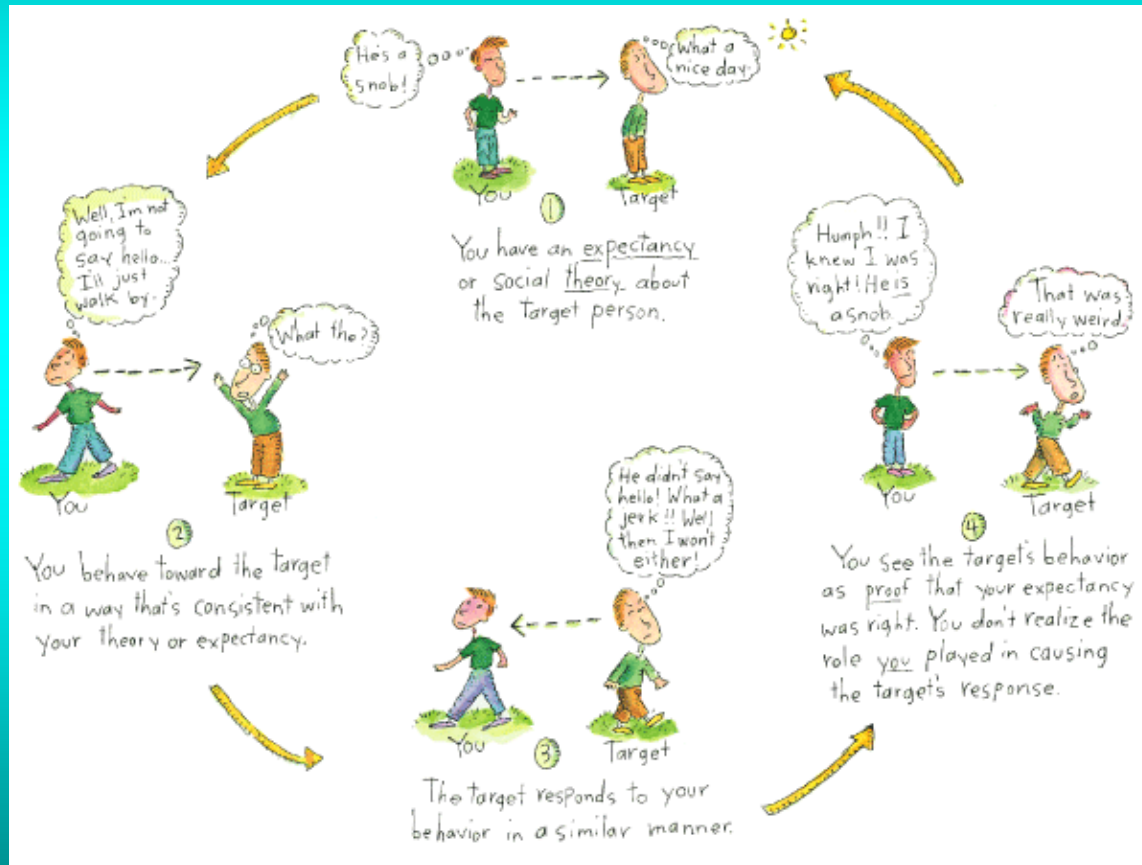
***Perseverance effect***: the tendency for people's beliefs about themselves and their world to persist even when those beliefs are discredited.

# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking

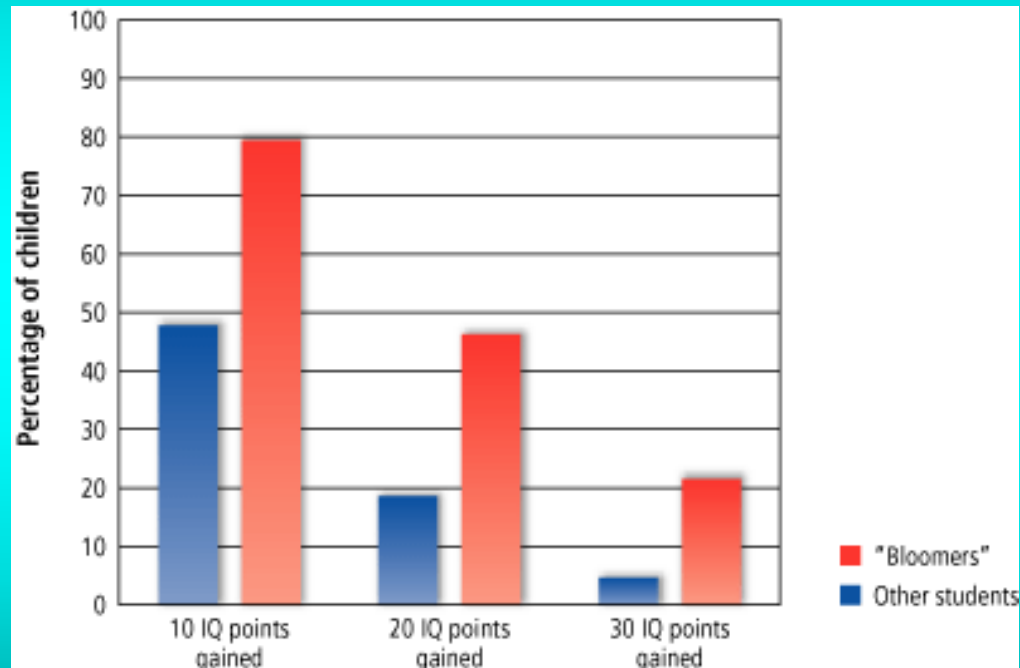
- **People as Everyday Theorists: Schemas and Their Influence**

***Self-fulfilling prophecy***: whereby people have an expectation about what another person is like, which influences how they act toward that person, which causes that person to behave in a way consistent with the original expectation.

# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking



# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking



# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking

- **Mental Strategies and Shortcuts**

*Judgmental heuristics* are mental shortcuts people use to make judgments quickly and efficiently.



# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking

- **Mental Strategies and Shortcuts**

The *availability heuristic* is a mental rule of thumb whereby people base a judgment on the ease with which they can bring something to mind.

# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking

- **Mental Strategies and Shortcuts**

The *representativeness heuristic* is a mental shortcut whereby people classify something according to how similar it is to a typical case.

# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking

- **Mental Strategies and Shortcuts**

***Base rate information*** is information about the frequency of members of different categories in the population. It usually is not considered when people are using mental shortcuts.

# On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking

- **Mental Strategies and Shortcuts**

The *anchoring and adjustment heuristic* is a mental shortcut that involves using a number or value as a starting point, and then adjusting one's answer away from this anchor.

One example of anchoring and adjustment is biased sampling, whereby people make generalizations from samples of information they know are biased or atypical.

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