Chapter 2 is all about Social Cognition: the mental schemes and shortcuts we take to understand our social world.

Last year, a major news event took place when Officer Darren Wilson, in Ferguson, Missouri, shot and killed an unarmed African American teen, Michael Brown.

How can you use the ideas of Social Cognition to better understand what happened, during the altercation between Officer Wilson and afterwards?

Best answers use a variety of Social Cognition theories or ideas, and apply them to multiple points of view (Officer Wilson's, Michael Brown, the general public, etc.)

It is easier for me to read and evaluate your essay if you cut and paste into the Sakai site; however, if Sakai doesn't allow you to do that easily, or it takes too much space, just provide an attachment.

On August 9, 2014, an unarmed 18-year-old African American named Michael Brown was fatally shot in Ferguson, Missouri by Officer Darren Wilson. This event has resulted in protests and civil unrest, sparking debate about law enforcement's relationship with African Americans. We can study how the ideas of social cognition may aid in understanding the altercation.

The policeman, Officer Wilson, probably was experiencing automatic cognition during the event. Once Michael Brown had posed a serious threat, he had quick thoughts about defending himself so he shot a gun as self-defense. The general public could argue that he should've undergone controlled cognition, where he took a moment to really think about the situation and understand the consequences of his actions.

One could argue that salience was an issue. The general public seems to feel that Officer Wilson shot Brown because he was African American. It's possible that Wilson was attracted to the situation because of salience characteristics (Brown being African American and breaking the law when robbing a convenience store). Wilson's argument in the trial is that the gun was used for self-defense. As a police officer, he was taught to project himself in a harmful situation. Since this idea was ingrained in his mind, self-defense was a highly accessible construct in his altercation with Brown. The availability heuristic of self-defense may have influenced judgment so that despite the fact he was shooting someone, it was easier to think that he was protecting himself rather than killing another person.

However, not everyone is sympathetic to his self-defense claim. It's possible that the false consensus bias could be playing a role. Wilson overestimated the extent to which other people would hold the view that he used the gun as self-defense. Also the projection bias could've been an influence in that others would share the same cognitive states as Wilson had during the event.

It's possible that Wilson could've been experiencing an overconfident bias. He might've been thinking since he was a police officer the altercation wouldn't of been a big deal. Unfortunately, police officers aren't above the law and this event has caused a civil unrest in the US. This could also be linked to the optimistic bias. Wilson could've been focusing on a positive outcome rather than a negative one.

There's also abundant evidence that our social cognition is heavily influenced by our affective states. For example, if Wilson was in a bad mood leading up to his encounter with Brown, his mood could've easily influenced his actions. This goes the same for Brown. Since Brown had just robbed a convenience store he may have been feeling overconfident which could've led to him fighting with Wilson.

Brown could've experienced misattribution of arousal during the event. Instead of linking his arousal to him stealing cigarillos, he linked it to fighting with a police officer. This misattribution resulted in him provoking Wilson enough that he felt the need to use a gun as self-defense.

I'm sure the general public, Brown's family, and Wilson have been experiencing counterfactual thinking. The general public may be thinking what would've happened if Brown hadn't provoked Wilson or shown that he was unarmed. Brown's family could easily be thinking what would've happened if their son had never robbed a
convenience store that evening. Wilson is could be wondering what would’ve happened if he hadn’t shot Wilson.

Due to this event, the general public, Wilson, and Brown’s family have developed schemas about the situation. It’s possible that assimilation or accommodation has occurred in the general public’s mind on their schemas towards police officers. This process could be may the reason for the vigorous debate about law enforcement’s relationship with African Americans.

Cognitive processing can effect how we perceive our world, having a major influence on our behavior. Mood states are also crucial determinants of our judgments. Ideas of social cognition can help us better understand what happened during the altercation between Officer Wilson and Brown.

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