



## CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

This chapter previews one of social cognition's main themes, but anticipated even earlier: People's thought processes can operate on automatic or in control, or somewhere between the two. The most automatic processes occur without effort, awareness, control, intent, or capacity use. Subliminal, preconscious processing of social cues (faces, concepts) affects cognitive associations, affective reactions, and behavior. Conscious priming of (exposure to) concepts can trigger unconscious, automatic processes. Some cues are chronically accessible to some people, but situations also prime particular concepts and even motives.

People control some types of automatic processing by deliberately instigating a goal, which then triggers automatic processes. Habits illustrate. People also consciously attend to certain actions, plan for them, and execute them. However, people do tend to overestimate the extent to which their thoughts control their actions, or even the extent to which they can control their thoughts. Consciousness serves multiple functions, both internal and external, often occupied by unfinished business and social concerns.

Various motivations determine whether people engage relatively automatic or controlled processes. Each motive can push toward either automaticity or control, depending on circumstances. Belonging with other people powerfully motivates people to get along with others. Socially shared understanding motivates much social cognition, using both consensus and information-seeking. Control emphasizes social contingencies between what one does and what happens, important to well-being. Regarding affect, people enhance the self and optimistically trust ingroup others. The interplay of these motives and available information determines when people rely on well-worn, relatively automatic processes and when on more deliberate, controlled processes.

Dual-mode models appear in person perception, attribution, attitudes, self, inference, and prejudice, to name a few. Single-mode alternatives argue for similar processes, regardless of information and motivation. Social cognition researchers continue to debate, as the next chapters show.