Biography Susan T. Fiske

Susan T. Fiske is Eugene Higgins Professor of Psychology, Princeton University (Ph.D., Harvard University; honorary doctorates, Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium; Universiteit Leiden, Netherlands; Universität Basel, Switzerland). She investigates social cognition, especially cognitive stereotypes and emotional prejudices, at cultural, interpersonal, and neural levels. Author of about 350 articles and chapters, she is most known for theories and research on how people think about each other: the continuum model of impression formation, the power-as-control theory, the ambivalent sexism theory, and the stereotype content model (SCM).

Her current SCM work focuses on the two fundamental dimensions of social cognition, perceived warmth/trustworthiness and perceived competence. Having shown that these are predicted by perceived social structure (respectively cooperation-competition and status), her lab has shown that specific emotions follow each warmth-x-competence quadrant (pride, disgust, envy, pity) and predict specific behaviors (active and passive help or harm), directed at distinct kinds of individuals and social groups. Using representative sample surveys, lab experiments, and neuro-imaging, her lab currently focuses on varieties of dehumanization predicted by the SCM model: dehumanizing allegedly disgusting homeless people, Schadenfreude toward the enviable rich, as well as paternalistic pity and prescriptive prejudices toward older people, disabled people, and women in traditional roles. Social structural variables drive these social cognitive processes.

The U.S. Supreme Court cited her gender-bias testimony, and she testified before President Clinton's Race Initiative Advisory Board. These influenced her recent edited volume, Beyond Common Sense: Psychological Science in the Courtroom. Currently an editor of the Annual Review of Psychology, Psychological Review, and Handbook of Social Psychology, she has written the upper-level texts Social Beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology (3/e) and Social Cognition: From Brains to Culture 4/e). She also wrote The Human Brand: How We Relate to People, Products, and Companies, which applies her models to how people perceive corporations. Her general-interest book, funded by a Guggenheim and the Russell Sage Foundation, is Envy Up and Scorn Down: How Status Divides Us.

Most recently, she has been elected to the National Academy of Sciences and the American Philosophical Society. Past recipient of the American Psychological Association’s Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award and the Association for Psychological Science William James Award, she has been elected President of Association for Psychological Science, President of the Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences, as well as its FABBS Foundation, Fellow of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, and Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Because it takes a village, her graduate students and lab alumni conspired for her to win Princeton’s Mentoring Award and the Association Psychological Science Mentoring Award.

She gardens vegetables in Vermont, reads contemporary fiction, and plays poker with her blended family including sociologist Doug Massey; his daughter, who is training in early childhood education; Susan’s budding social-psychologist daughter and her law-student boyfriend; plus a banker stepson, his early-intervention-expert wife, and two toddlers. (Well, maybe not poker with the toddlers. Yet.)
Most cited work:


