



Curriculum Vitae Professor Dr Thomas Mussweiler

Name: Thomas Mussweiler

Date of birth: 6 July 1969

Research Priorities: Social cognition, judgement and decision-making processes, comparative processes, self-assessment, anchoring effects

Thomas Mussweiler is a German social psychologist. The psychological foundations of human judgement and decision-making processes make up the core of his research. His focus lies on the dynamics of comparative processes. Mussweiler developed the “selective accessibility model”, SAM, with which judgement, decision making, and comparative processes can be explained. His model and his work have been applied in a variety of areas.

Academic and Professional Career

- since 2016 Professor of Organisational Behaviour, London Business School, London, UK
- 2004 - 2016 Professor, Social Psychology and Differential Psychology, University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany
- 2002 - 2003 Visiting Associate Professor of Work and Organisational Psychology, Julius-Maximilians-Universität of Würzburg, Würzburg, Germany
- 2002 Habilitation, Julius-Maximilians-Universität of Würzburg, Würzburg, Germany
- 2000 - 2004 Head, Junior Research Group, Chair of Psychology, Julius-Maximilians-Universität of Würzburg, Emmy Noether Programme, German Research Foundation (DFG), Würzburg, Germany
- 1998 - 2000 Postdoctoral Fellow, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, Chicago, USA
- 1997 Doctorate in Psychology, Trier University, Trier, Germany

- 1995 - 1998 Research Associate, Chair of Psychology, Julius-Maximilians-Universität of Würzburg, Würzburg, Germany
- 1995 Diploma in Psychology
- 1991 - 1992 Degree Programme, Clark University, Worcester, USA
- 1989 - 1995 Psychology Degree Programme, Trier University, Trier, Germany

Functions in Scientific Societies and Committees

- 2015 - 2016 Deputy Speaker, Center for Social and Economic Behavior (C-SEB), University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany

Project Coordination, Membership in Collaborative Research Projects

- 2014 - 2018 Speaker, Research Group (FOR) 2150 “Relativity in Social Cognition: Antecedents and Consequences of Comparative Thinking”, DFG, Germany
- 2011 - 2019 Applicant, Subproject “Trust: A Social Cognition Perspective”, FOR 1371, DFG, Germany
- 2005 - 2012 European Young Investigator Award (EURYI) “Psychological Relativity – Comparison Processes in Judgment, Behavior, and Affect”, European Science Foundation (ESF)
- 2000 - 2006 Emmy Noether Junior Research Group “Social Comparative Processes”, German Research Foundation (DFG), Germany

Honours and Awarded Memberships

- since 2015 Member, German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, Germany
- 2006 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize, German Research Foundation (DFG), Germany
- 2004 Charlotte and Karl Bühler Award, German Psychological Association (DGPs)
- 2002 Jos Jaspers Medal, European Association of Experimental Social Psychology (EASP)
- 2001 - 2006 Member, Junge Akademie, Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities and National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, Germany
- 2001 Heinz Maier-Leibnitz Award, German Research Foundation (DFG), Germany
- 1998 - 2000 Postdoctoral Fellowship, German Research Foundation (DFG), Germany

Research Priorities

Thomas Mussweiler is a German social psychologist. The psychological foundations of human judgement and decision-making processes make up the core of his research. His focus lies on the dynamics of comparative processes. Mussweiler developed the “selective accessibility model”, SAM, with which judgement, decision making, and comparative processes can be explained. His model and his work have been applied in a variety of areas.

As soon as humans judge other humans, themselves or objects, they do so using comparison. For a long time, the processes underlying these comparisons were insufficiently understood.

Mussweiler’s research has contributed significantly to the theoretical and empirical understanding of these processes. The social psychologist developed an integrative model to explain comparative processes which he was able to test empirically. Thomas Mussweiler investigates the psychological dynamics of comparative processes, in particular in two contexts: self-assessment and decision making.

In the context of self-assessment, the answer to a question such as “How athletic am I?” depends on whether the standard of athleticism is an elite athlete or an unathletic relative. Thomas Mussweiler’s research shows that people tend to concentrate on similarities they have with the standard of comparison. The extent to which comparisons with others are used for personal decisions is also a question of cultural conventions. There are clear differences between more individualistic cultures and those, who are more collectivist.

Comparisons are also central to the behaviour surrounding decision making. Using the example of the “anchor effect”, Mussweiler’s research shows that human decisions are often influenced by numerical standards of comparison (“anchors”), even when these standards are irrelevant. This influence is typically subconscious and can lead to errors in reasoning.

Research into the “anchor effect” has important implications for various areas of application: In legal psychology, for example, it can explain unwanted influences on judges’ sentencing decisions. In negotiation research, it explains the great importance of the first bids in price negotiations, on which all subsequent bids are oriented.

In his other research, Mussweiler has investigated the topic “trust and distrust in everyday situations”, something about which, despite its relevance, relatively little is known. Base markers for individual positions in regards to trust were determined to include openness, willingness to cooperate, and orientation on social values.