
MODULE 1 STUDY NOTES

Social Cognition and Social Thinking

Social psychology and cognition

Defn social psychology: how human thought, feeling and behaviour is influenced by and has influence on other people.

Defn social cognition: cognitive processes and structures that are influenced by and influence social behaviour. It is the dominant perspective on the explanation of social behaviour.

Thought= internal language, mostly conscious. Cognitions= mostly automatic mental processing.

History of cognition in social psychology:

- Wundt (1897) used self-observation and introspection to gain an understanding of cognition
- In the 20th century there was a shift to observable events (more scientific focus) and behaviourism
- Lewin (1951) used Gestalt principles (the whole influences the parts) and believed that behaviour could be understood as a function of people's perceptions (cognitions)
- 1960's saw a new interest in cognition, development of information processing models also coincided with technological (computational) advances
- 1980's there was an explosion in social cognition research
- Recent development: Social neuroscience: exploration of brain activity associated with social cognition and processes.

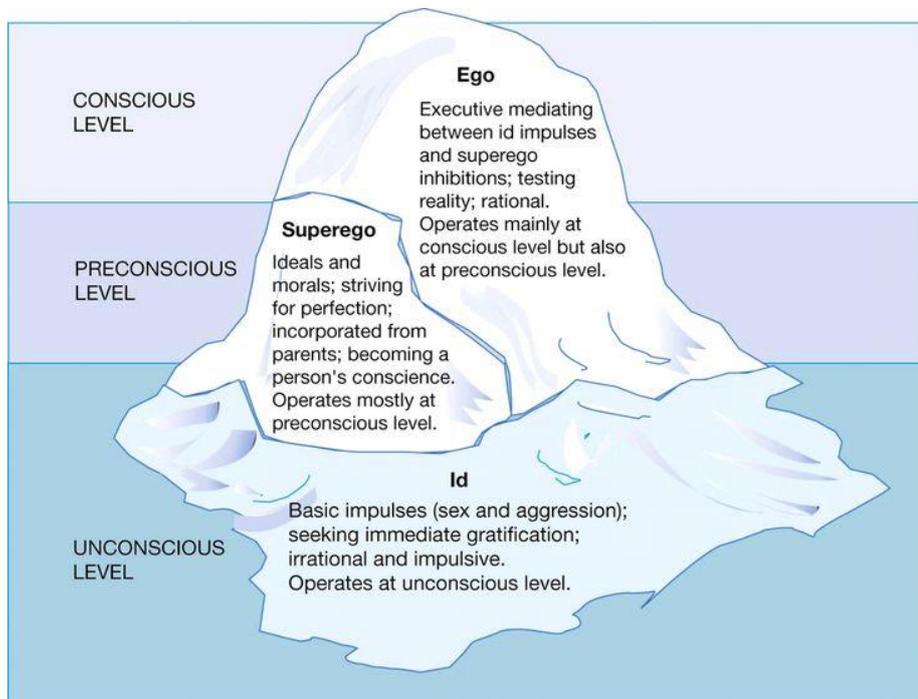
Cognitive emphasis in social psychology has had four guises:

1. Cognitive consistency: popular in the 40's and 50's, people are motivated to reduce perceived discrepancies between cognitions.
2. Naïve scientist: early 70's. people need to attribute causes to behaviour and events and find meaning. This assumes people are rational and make cause-effect logical decisions (underpins attribution theories).
3. Cognitive miser: ignores motivation and recognises that there is limited processing capacity and therefore many cognitive shortcuts.
4. Motivated tactician: people have many cognitive strategies and they can choose on the basis of personal goals, motives and needs.

- He used free associations- the first thing that came to a patients mind and dream analysis to try to understand the unconscious of his patients
- Freud examined his own free associations and those of his patients and used this for the basis of his personality theories
- His extensive writing made him the most frequently cited psychologist of the 20th century

The structure of personality

- Freud's theory contains a mental apparatus or anatomy of personality that assist us in gratifying our instincts
- It consists of:
 1. The id: basic storehouse of uninhibited instinctual energy. All our drives originate in the id. Babies have only the id when they are born, they are therefore driven by the pleasure principle and primary process thinking.
 2. The ego: libido energy transfers from the id and the ego develops as the child gets older. The ego is the executive part of the model, i.e. the thinking, planning, organising part. Works on reality principle with secondary process thinking. It is the mediator between the person and the outside world.
 3. The superego: like the conscience, helps make moral judgements. It is composed of parental attitudes and evaluations and therefore is influenced by social prescription and culture.



- Delayed gratification: the notion that if you wait patiently your needs will be met
- The superego acts in opposition to the id, the three parts of the personality are in conflict with one another (intra-psycho conflict).
- The outcomes of the conflict can be seen as symptoms of mental upset or disturbance