



認知與腦科學研究中心
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Centre for Cognitive and Brain Sciences



社會科學學院
FACULDADE DE CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

***Social
cognition
seminar***

SOCIAL COGNITION:

From brains to culture

Preface and Introduction (Ch.1)

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Preface

1ST Edition define the birth of social cognition in its modern form: Social psychology was emerging from a crisis, which was partly resolved in the excitement of the fresh ideas and methods newly available from cognitive psychology.

2ND Edition defining the birth of social cognition in its modern form. which proved not to be a mere fad, an interlude, or an era.

New Edition: Social cognitive affective neuroscience

Original purpose: describing how people make sense of other people and themselves.

As we write, social psychology finds itself in crisis again. This time the issue is reproducibility of results, with a consequent focus on transparency, statistical rigor, ethical choices, and replication (no crisis, no complacency).

Introduction

Social cognition is the study of how people make sense of other people and themselves. It focuses on how ordinary people think and feel about people – including themselves.

Phenomenology: to describe systematically how ordinary people say they experience their world.
(naïve psychology or commonsense psychology)

Leaning heavily on the theory and methods of cognitive psychology, which describe precise mechanisms of learning and thinking that apply widely, including in social perception.

Introduction: Approaches to Studying the Social Thinker

Asch's Competing Models

Asch (1946) examined how people make sense of other people, combining their personality components and coming up with an integrated overall impression.

He theorized that we experience another person as a psychological unit, that we fit the person's various qualities (traits) into a single unifying theme (impression).

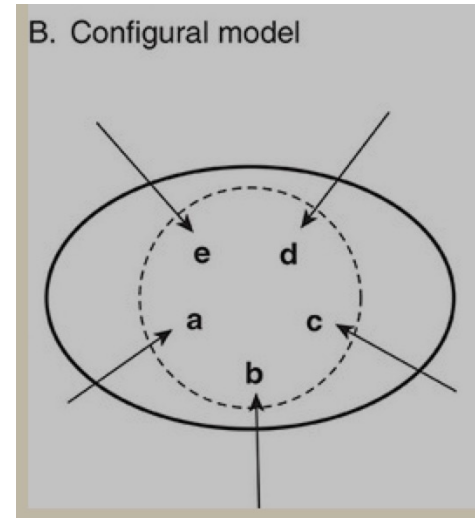
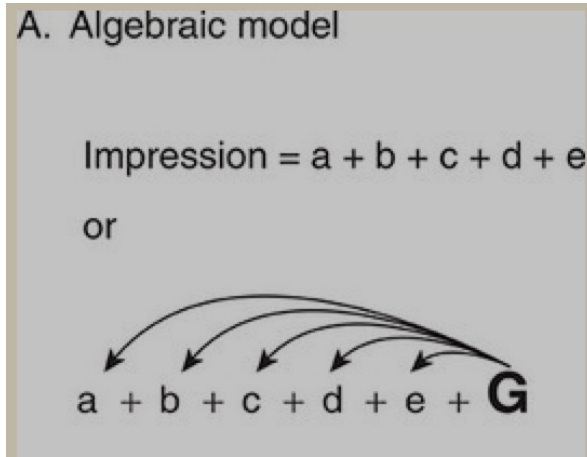
Switching the traits warm and cold created completely different descriptions of the target person.

“intelligent, skillful, industrious, cold, determined, practical, and cautious.”

“intelligent, skillful, industrious, warm, determined, practical, and cautious.”

Introduction: Approaches to Studying the Social Thinker

Asch's Competing Models



The pressure toward unity changes the meaning of the individual elements to fit better in context.

The elemental approach breaks scientific problems down into pieces and analyzes the pieces in separate detail before combining them.

The holistic approach analyzes the pieces in the context of other pieces and focuses on the entire configuration of relationships among them.

Introduction: Approaches to Studying the Social Thinker

Elemental Origins of Social Cognition Research

The British philosophers' elemental tradition likened the mind to chemistry, with ideas as the elements.

The bonds between concepts create mental chemistry.

If sneezes use tissues, the two can become a unit through contiguity (sneeze-and-tissue becomes a mental compound).

Psychology emerged as a discipline separate from philosophy in the early 20th century, and finally the notions of mental chemistry were tested empirically.

Introduction: Approaches to Studying the Social Thinker

Holistic Origins of Social Cognition Research

German philosopher Immanuel Kant argued for tackling the whole mind at once. In his view, mental phenomena are inherently subjective. That is, the mind actively constructs a reality that goes beyond the original thing in and of itself.

German-American Gestalt psychology drew on these initial holistic insights.

Gestalt psychologists saw the mental chemistry metaphor of the elementalists as misguided because a chemical compound has properties not predictable from its isolated elements.

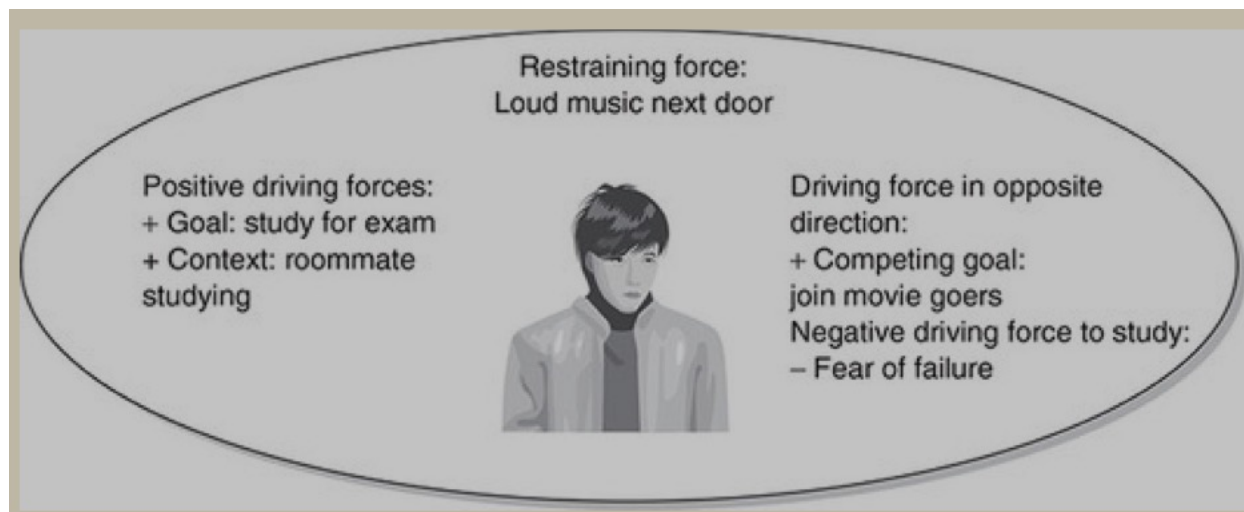
Similarly, the perceptual whole has properties not discernible from the isolated parts.

Introduction: Approaches to Studying the Social Thinker

Lewin's Person-Situation Field Theory

He emphasized the influence of the social environment, as perceived by the individual, which he called the psychological field.

No one force predicts action, but the dynamic equilibrium among them, the ever-changing balance of forces, does predict action.



Introduction: Approaches to Studying the Social Thinker

Lewin's Person-Situation Field Theory

The total psychological field (and hence behavior) is determined by two pairs of factors. The first pair consists of the person in the situation.

Ever since Lewin, social psychologists have seen both person and situation as essential to predicting behavior.

The second pair of psychological field factors that determines behavior is cognition and motivation.

Cognition provides the perceiver's interpretation of the world; without clear cognitions, behavior is not predictable. Cognitions help determine what a person will do, which direction behaviour will take.

The strength of motivation predicts whether the behaviour will occur at all and, if it does, how much of it will occur.

Introduction: The Ebb and Flow of Cognition in Psychology

Cognition in Experimental Psychology

Experimental psychology ultimately abandoned introspection as a method because it did not conform to scientific standards, namely: One's data should be publicly reproducible.

Psychologists shifted away from studying internal (cognitive) processes and toward external, publicly observable events.

Thorndike's (1940) theory of instrumental learning held no place for cognition. According to the theory, behaviour has certain rewarding and punishing effects, which cause the organism to repeat or avoid the behaviour later. In short, "the effect becomes a cause."

Both effect and cause are observable, and cognition seems irrelevant (Skinner, 1963).

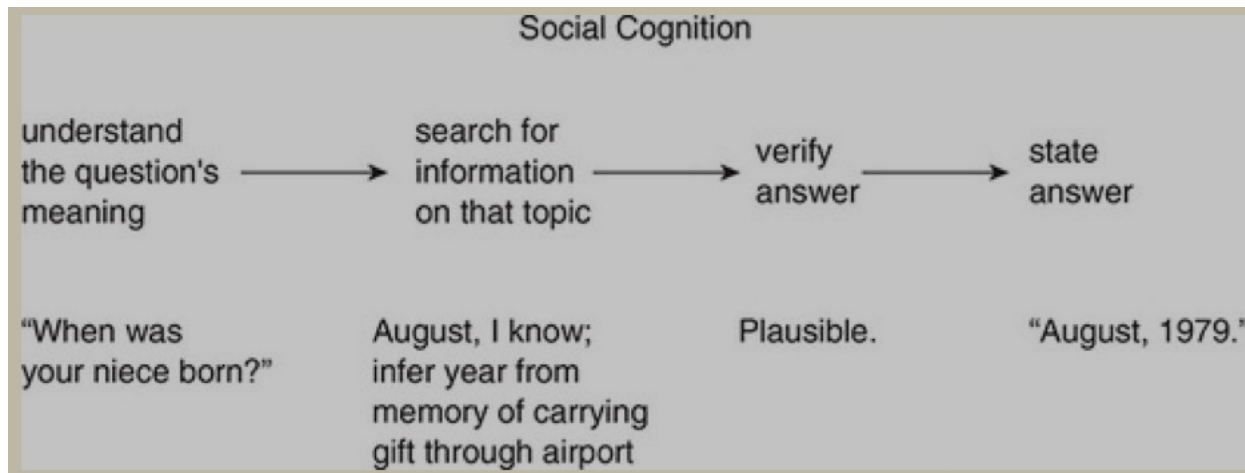
One behaviourist called the idea of cognition a superstition (J. Watson, 1930).

Introduction: The Ebb and Flow of Cognition in Psychology

Cognition in Experimental Psychology

The complex, symbolic, and uniquely human phenomenon of language would not easily yield to behaviourist approaches.

Information processing refers to the idea that mental operations can be broken down into sequential stages.



Unlike behaviourists, information-processing approaches aim to specify cognitive mechanisms, to get inside the black box of the mind.

Introduction: The Ebb and Flow of Cognition in Psychology

Cognition in Social Psychology

Since Lewin, social psychologists have decided that social behaviour is more usefully understood as a function of people's perceptions of their world rather than as a function of objective descriptions of their stimulus environment.

Social psychologists view not only causes but also the end result of social perception and interaction in heavily cognitive terms, and this is a second way that social psychology has always been cognitive.

A third way that social psychology has always been cognitive: The person in between the presumed cause and the result is viewed as a thinking organism; this view contrasts with regarding the person as an emotional organism or a mindless automaton.

Introduction: The Ebb and Flow of Cognition in Psychology

Cognition in Social Psychology

表 1.1 社会认知研究中的社会思考者模型

社会思考者模型	年代	动机的主要角色	认知的主要角色	理论举例 (相关章节)
一致性寻求者	1950—1960s	减少认知不一致引发的不适的驱力	对行为和信念的认知	态度的失调理论 (第 9 章)
朴素科学家	1970s	预测与控制, 合格的理性	基本的、理性的分析	归因共变模型 (第 6 章)
认知吝啬者	1980s	迅速的、充分的理解	走捷径以节约有限的容量	启发式决策 (第 7 章)
有动机的策略家	1990s	思考是为了在社会情境中行动	互动目标组织认知策略	双重加工模型 (第 2 章), 尤其是刻板印象 (第 11 章)
被激活的行动者	2000s	社会生存与发展	自动化的情感与行为	内隐联想 (第 3~4 章, 第 12~15 章)

Introduction: What is Social Cognition?

The field concerns how people make sense of other people and themselves in order to coordinate with their social world.

Most social cognition research shares some basic features: unabashed mentalism, orientation toward process, cross-fertilization between cognitive and social psychologies, and at least some concern with real-world social issues.

表 1.2 识别社会认知取向的各种特征

心灵主义	过程	交叉兼容	现实世界问题
是什么: 认知表征 (如, 一般知识和例子)	怎样实现: 认知机制 (如, 注意、记忆、推理)	从何处来: 采用认知科学方法 (如, 反应时、神经成像)	为什么: 社会问题 (如, 精神及身体健康、法律、偏见、说服、亲社会性)

Introduction: People are Not Things

Social cognitive psychology will never be a literal translation of cognitive psychology. It profits from theories and methods adapted to new uses, but the social world provides perspectives and challenges that are dramatic, if not unique, features of thinking about other people and oneself.

表 1.3 作为刺激的人与无生命的物为何以及有何不同

人是（而物不是那么）：
有意图的因果主体
被对方感知的同时也感知对方
与自己相似
有自我意识的目标
重要但无法观察的特质的所有者
可变的
以不确定的准确度为人所知
天生复杂的
需要解释

Introduction: Brains Matter

Social cognition could be the default, resting state.

In many social neuroscience studies, the characteristically social “activations” often emerge as relatively little change from a supposedly neutral baseline (e.g., staring at the fixation point between trials).

In contrast, object judgments often create de activations from the baseline.

Why do we think socially all the time? Because our world is a social place or because we are social beings?

Mildner, J. N., & Tamir, D. I. (2021). The people around you are inside your head: Social context shapes spontaneous thought. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.

Thanks for your attendance!