

## Priming Matrix – Collective Nonconscious Programming

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### Abstract

Contemporary sociology, and especially social psychology, explores the mechanisms of priming, automaticity, and their effects on social behavior. Priming matrix is a new concept, a phrase semantically coined by the author in order to explain such complex socio-psychological phenomena in the area of social cognition. This study makes an analyses and description of the dynamics and mechanisms of the programming from a socio-psychological aspect, Transactional analysis, and the perspective of Christian psychotherapy. Methodologically, new concepts are applied: priming matrix and types of representations (Ilievska) with its operational elements (stimulus, prime, representation, subliminal level), and the concepts: awareness and collective nonconscious schemes (Ilievski, 2015), which are described as an opposite of the natural way of life, the personal autonomy and the real freedom. Each person has a basic need for relation, psychological organization, and structure. In its foundation lies the creation of basic mental constructs, socio-cognitive schemes, which have a neurobiological ground. In addition, human behavior can be programmed, nonconsciously, on multiple levels: individual, collective, global, through the complex psychological processes, modeling and conditioning, to the more subtle forms of priming, creating passive automatic social behavior.

**Keywords:** priming matrix, representations, awareness, collective nonconscious schemes, automatic social behavior

### Introduction

Contemporary sociology, particularly social psychology, nowadays are intensively studying the phenomenon of priming and its effect on human behavior. It also encompasses the mechanisms of automation, unconscious processes and programming that can have the ultimate effect on human behavior, raising questions about the possibility of impact, unconscious control to its automation.

Such hypotheses are attractive not only in the field of sociology and psychology, but are also based on pre-established philosophical and anthropological doctrines, as well as theological discourses, specifically in the field of Christian psychotherapy.

Priming and social priming are concepts in modern social psychology that were first explained in the domain of modern marketing and consumerism in terms of the impact on the consumer choice.

The phenomena and mechanisms of priming have not been elucidated so far, and there are several studies investigating its impact on human behavior.

This study is an attempt and enthusiasm by two authors, each with his specific professional aspect to contribute to the elucidation of this complex socio-psychological phenomenon, by applying a new descriptive hypothesis regarding the structure, dynamics and mechanisms of priming.

Thus, a new concept – priming matrix (Ilievska) is constructed as an innovative socio-psychological construct and a semantic term by which analysis and descriptive work is performed.

The concepts of Transactional Analysis, such as social psychology and communication theory are applied, as well as the perspective of Christian psychotherapy with the concepts: collective unconscious schemes and awareness (Митрополит Струмички Наум, 2015).

### **Social Environment and Human Behavior**

Man as a subject exists in the milieu of his environment, with which he is in constant complex communication vectors, such as social interpersonal relationships and individual interpersonal processes.

Part of the communication takes place at the overt, explicit level, but the vast majority at the covert, implicit level. Moreover, social cognition reveals that besides the processes on the level of consciousness and rational reasoning, much of it is perceived and processed below the threshold of consciousness as unconscious processes.

The basic principles of functioning of the human psyche are the following:

1. Every being exists and is organized through contact and intimate relation, which is the basic principle of ego psychology.
2. Throughout development, the psyche is structured and differentiated into coherent systems of thoughts, feelings, somatosensory perceptions that Eric Bern (1964) defines as ego states (Parent, Adult, Child) analogous to Freud's: Id, Ego, Super (Freud, 1999).
3. Human cognition tends to form mental constructs – prototypes (stereotypes, values, cultural norms) that are considered to have a central role in priming and creating a priming effect. The following is explained through the diagrams offered.
4. Ego states have a social dimension, with a continuum and capacity for constant co-creation in the social environment that opens up a new perspective on them as “socio-cognitive schemes” (Scilligo, 2009). In this way we emphasize their tendency towards fluidity and external relation to the social environment, “the ego states as active social-cognitive processes, or schemas, continually being re-created in the dynamic interaction between the individual and his or her environment” (De Luca and Tosi, 2011).
5. Apart from the mechanism of internalization, according to the contemporary theory of the embodied cognition, the mental apparatus also has a tendency for externalization, whereby “cognition often reaches out into the world allowing external entities to act as representations

in the cognitive system consisting of both the individual and the environment” (Clark & Chalmers, 1998; Hutchins, 1995; Zhang, 1997).

The essential question is exactly “how do these external entities affect the individual’s cognitive ability to perform a particular task?” (Svensson and Ziemke, 2005).

### **Stimuli and Stimuli Hunger**

The need for an environmental, external factor in maintaining human psycho-biological existence and normative functioning is indisputable for adequately satisfying the basic psycho-biological needs that Eric Berne defines as “six hungers” (Berne, 1970).

One of those psychological needs is “stimuli hunger” or the need for emotional, sensory, and psychological stimuli that provide psychodynamic equilibrium and biological existence.

This is the dyad and relational dimension that defines the human – environment relationship from which derives all and more complex relational and communication phenomena.

In this way, human beings are subjected to influences from the social environment that allow them to be modeled from an early age, to more complex forms of influence or manipulation of its mindset, which can trigger automatic, involuntary and unconscious behaviors (Bargh and Williams, 2006).

Stimulus \_\_ Mental Representation\_\_ Cognitive Outcome \_\_ Behavioral Outcome

Figure 1.

### **Priming and Priming Effect**

At the core of priming is the use and manipulation of different types of external, relevant stimuli that perform priming or facilitation and incidental activation of internal socio-mental representations.

Such activated representations subsequently trigger certain emotions, thoughts, and behavior within the recipient that are beyond his control, in the absence of intention, will, and consciousness at all.

Basic features of the priming phenomenon in general are:

1. Relevant stimulus (object, behavior, emotion).
2. Subliminal level of action.
3. Unconscious mental processes without the intention and participation of the recipient.
4. Incidental activation of the mental scheme.
5. Automatic social behavior.

### **PAC Model in the Light of Priming – Structure and Dynamics**

PAC Model consists of three ego states (Berne, 1964): Parent (P), Adult (A), Child (C).

Adult ego-state (A), the neopsyche, which has its neurobiological basis in neocortex, is responsible for the subject's specific, adequate, and purposeful behavior in the external environment and maintaining internal equilibrium. Adult enables the process of continuous "hic at nunc" creation of new constructs, which we defined as empirical.

In the priming process, through this ego state one usually undergoes direct priming by observation of external models. In addition, the behavior of others that imply a certain goal may result in the adoption of another's goal within the observer, "automatic goal pursuits."

"Individuals may automatically adopt and pursue a goal that is implied by another person's behavior" (Aarts, Gollwitzer & Hassin, 2004).

In addition to behavior, by observing someone else's emotional reactions, the recipient can imitate another's facial expression and even experience another's emotion. In this way we are susceptible to constant contamination from the external environment by causing unconscious, rudimentary emotional reactions to the Child's ego state (archaeopsyche).

This phenomenon, known as "emotional contagion," is described by Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson (1994). The same priming effect can be caused by a simulation in the absence of the object, but by mentalization of the introjected object (Smith and Mackie, 2014).

In the Parent's ego state, extero-psyche, there are social representations (stereotypes, cultural traits) that are formed in relation to significant others (parents, social environment, culture, society) as a result of the process of modeling, conditioning and social adaptation. At this level, mental representations, "trait concepts and stereotypes become active automatically in the presence of relevant behavior or stereotyped-group characteristics (Bargh, Chen and Burrows, 1996)."

### **New Perspective on the Concept of Representation**

In classical cognitive psychology, representation refers to mental, cognitive schemas which are simply defined as "a hypothetical internal cognitive symbol that represents external reality" (Morgan, 2014).

Contemporary views, besides the internal, also include the external component in their creation and the continuous feedback loop between the subject and the external environment, which include the concept of external representation – or embodied representation (Svensson and Ziemke, 2005).

"Theories of embodied cognition have suggested that cognition often reaches out into the world allowing external entities to act as representations in the cognitive system consisting of both the individual and the environment" (Clark & Chalmers, 1998; Hutchins, 1995; Zhang, 1997).

We have formed a new terminology and systematization of representations from the perspective of Transaction Analysis, applying the First Order Structural Model diagram (Berne, 1964).

In creating the new hypothesis of the Priming Matrix concept, cognitive representations have a central function. In the previous text, it has been argued that in current trends and research, the terms and definitions of them are changing.

A new concept of representation (see: Figure 2) is constructed (Ilievska).

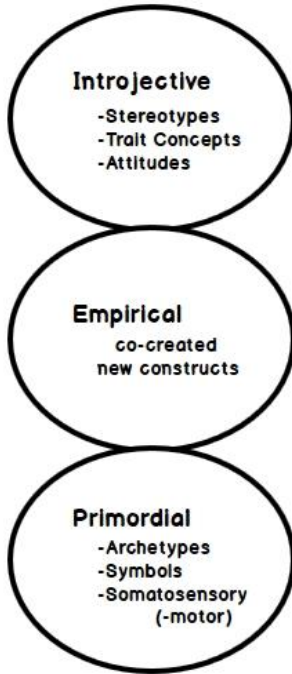


Figure 2  
Types of Representation

Three types of representations are defined, which have been systematized analogously to the three ego states according to the PAC model:

1. **Introjected** – socio-cultural mental constructs (stereotype, trait concept, attitudes) incorporated in the ego state Parent.
2. **Empirical** – ongoing and in continuous creation in the ego state of Adult as a result of the interrelationships between “I – Other.”
3. **Primordial** – archaic, symbolic, somatosensory and sensomotoric representations in Child.

### **Priming Matrix (PM)**

PM is a descriptive model of the complex socio-psychological phenomenon of priming and priming effect (see: Figure 3).

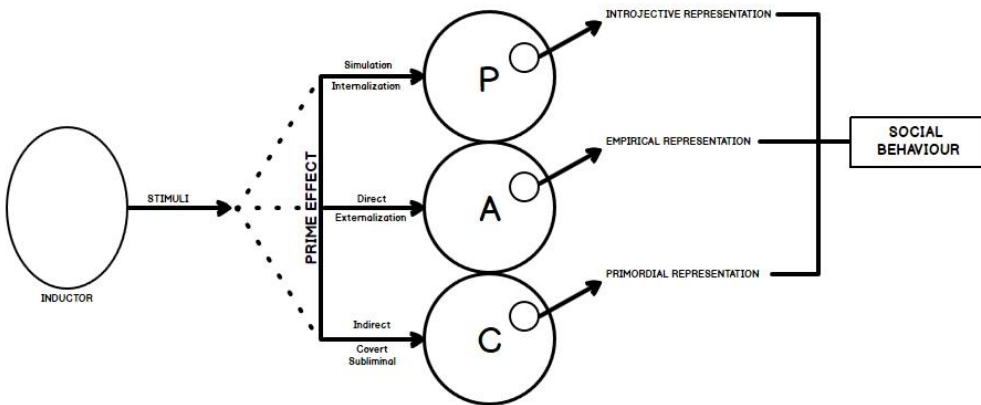


Figure 3  
Priming Matrix

PM is a field in which complex relational phenomena and interactions between the inducer and the recipient take place, by the use of relevant stimuli that activate activate internal representations (primordial, empirical, interactive) and result in certain pro-social behaviors.

Priming matrix is an elementary form through which the processes of manipulation and automaticity of an individual's behavior take place. Through its mechanisms the secular model of life is implemented with the phenomena of cultural homogenization, globalization, indoctrination.

In explaining the mechanisms of its creation we postulate that this phenomena are involved in the formation and dynamics of PM:

1. Stimuli hunger.
2. Sensation transference – a term used for unconscious evaluation of people about a product based on how the item looks, not on the actual item itself (Smith, 2015).
3. Ulterior transaction – two messages are transmitted at the same time. One of these is an overt or social level message. The other is a covert or psychological one.
4. Third rule of communication – the behavioral outcome of an ulterior transaction is determined at the psychological and not at the social level.

We have particularly emphasized the phenomenon of nonconsciousness as a factor used in the dynamics of PM, the hidden level of communication, and the manipulation of internal mental representations.

PM is a scheme by which we explain action at the individual level, but its effects are systematic and global. This is how we relate this phenomena with the CNS (Collective Nonconscious Schemas), which are described below.

## **Awareness vs. Nonconsciousness**

From the point of view of Christian psychotherapy, awareness implies belief and knowledge of one's self and one's position with God, where "man is none and nothing, and the Lord Jesus Christ is all, and what we are and what we have (Митрополит Струмички Наум, 2020).

We can show this true awareness practically through an ascetic struggle of "continually gathering and keeping one's mind in the words of prayer, that is, by concentrating His name in prayer."

Any existence out of the true consciousness is nonconsciousness in the area of illusion and the domain of priming matrix.

## **Collective Nonconscious Schemes (CNS)**

CNS are constructs that are created outside the point of reference – God at the level of the unconscious. They arise under the influence of the secular pattern of life and are a departure from the ontological determinism of man (Илиевски and Илиевска, 2018).

They are created outside the axis of natural way of life and the three stages of spiritual development; hence, one begins to live on a level of external identification with incomplete and fragmented forms (state, nation, party) and undergoes a process of disintegration and fragmentation (Митрополит Струмички Наум, 2015).

CNS are a product of the fallen nature of man and arise as a result of the collision between one's individual passions and his thoughts coming out of the distracted mind due to the unpurified energy, which is directed – through the Ego – in the world (secondary function of the mind).

## **Instead of a Conclusion**

One needs to be aware that people today have internalized the world with all its emerging objects and particulates as a psycho-socio-cultural representation in the collective nonconscious in each of us.

Not only do people live in the world, but the world lives in people as well. People are interconnected through their passions (Иlievski, 2015), which are part of their fallen nature, the unconscious part of the psyche – Id (Freudian psychoanalysis).

In this way people are susceptible to the effects of processes in the domain of priming and illusion. This is also facilitated by the ego, as a basic apparatus through which – and most of the time – the modern man functions, torn apart and alienated from his inner, true, spiritual self.

The way out of such a matrix is offered only through the real awareness of the essential existential position of man in relation to the Creator and the activation of the primary function of his mind through the three stages of spiritual development (Иlievski and Иlievska, 2018):

At the first stage (purification of the heart from the passions), the energy of the mind is purified from incorporated mental representations and contamination.

At the second stage (illumination of the mind), the sufficiently purified mind descends in the spiritual heart where dwells the only and true Image, the Divine (and not some mental representative).

At the third stage, deification, there is identification with the Divine Image as a highest and ultimate goal of one's self-actualization as a person. According to Christian anthropology, this is the concept of true freedom, autonomy, and determination of man outside any matrix and pattern.

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