

Personality & Its Assessment

Dr Elena Gregoria Chai Chin Fern
Faculty of Social Sciences
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak



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- Note: Main reference and resource of this topic is taken from Feldman R (2013) Understanding Psychology. 11th edition. McGraw –Hill.



Introduction

- **Psychodynamic approaches to personality:** Assume that personality is motivated by inner forces and conflicts about which people have little awareness and over which they have no control



Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory: Mapping the Unconscious Mind

- **Psychoanalytic theory:** Freud's theory that unconscious forces act as determinants of personality
 - Unconscious
 - Preconscious: Holds material easily brought to mind



Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory: Mapping the Unconscious Mind

- Structuring personality: Id, ego, & superego
 - **Id**
 - Raw, unorganized, inborn part of personality
 - Sole purpose is to reduce tension created by primitive drives (hunger, sex, aggression, irrational impulses)
 - “Pleasure principle”



Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory: Mapping the Unconscious Mind

- Structuring personality: Id, ego, & superego
 - **Ego**
 - Provides a buffer between the id and the outside world
 - “Reality principle”

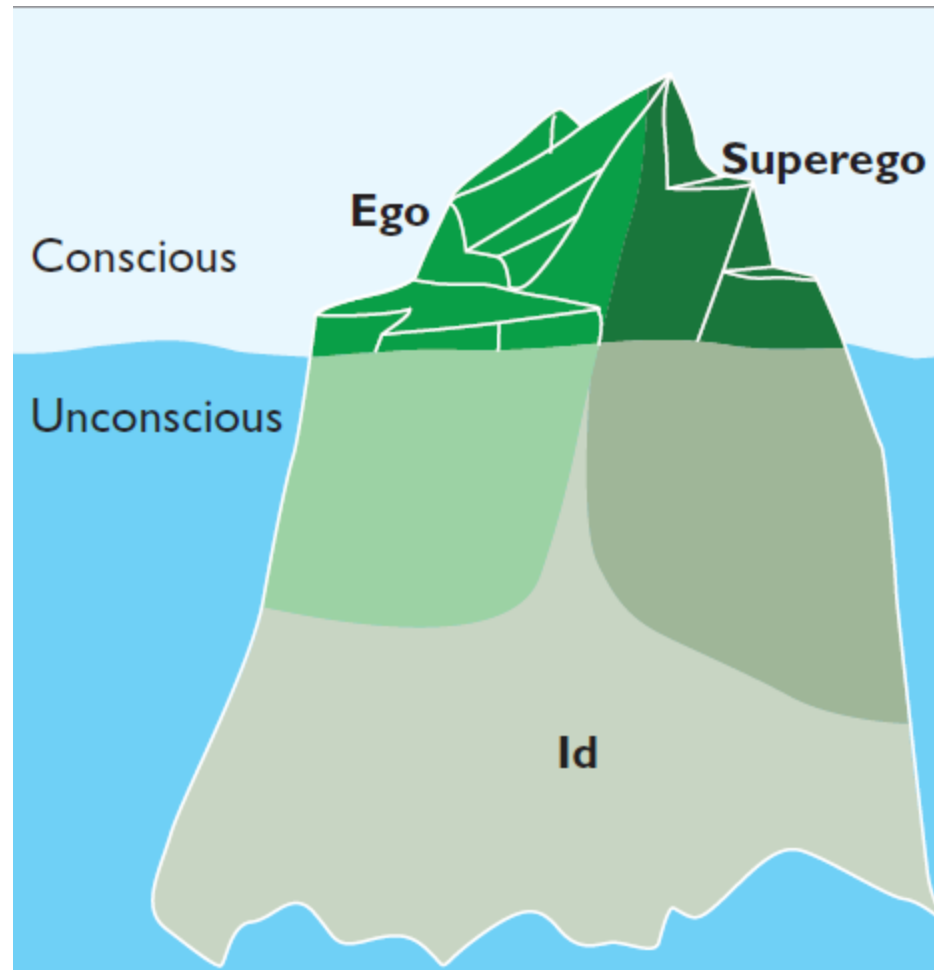


Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory: Mapping the Unconscious Mind

- Structuring personality: Id, ego, & superego
 - **Superego**
 - Represents the rights and the wrongs of society as handed down by important figures
 - “Morality principle”



Iceberg Analogy



Source: Feldman R (2013) Understanding Psychology. McGraw-Hill.

Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory: Mapping the Unconscious Mind

- Developing personality: Psychosexual stages
 - Individuals encounter conflicts between the demands of society and their own sexual urges
 - **Fixations:** Concerns that persist beyond the developmental period in which they first occur
 - **Oedipal conflict:** A child's sexual interest in his or her opposite-sex parent, typically resolved through identification with the same-sex parent



Psychosexual Stages

Stage	Age	Major Characteristics
Oral	Birth to 12–18 months	Interest in oral gratification from sucking, eating, mouthing, biting
Anal	12–18 months to 3 years	Gratification from expelling and withholding feces; coming to terms with society's controls relating to toilet training
Phallic	3 to 5–6 years	Interest in the genitals, coming to terms with Oedipal conflict leading to identification with same-sex parent
Latency	5–6 years to adolescence	Sexual concerns largely unimportant
Genital	Adolescence to adulthood	Reemergence of sexual interests and establishment of mature sexual relationships

Source: Feldman R (2013) Understanding Psychology. McGraw –Hill.



Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory: Mapping the Unconscious Mind

- **Defense mechanisms:** Unconscious strategies that people use to reduce anxiety by distorting reality and concealing the source of the anxiety from themselves
 - **Repression:** Unpleasant id impulses are pushed back into the unconscious



Defense Mechanisms

Defense Mechanism	Explanation	Example
Repression	Unacceptable or unpleasant impulses are pushed back into the unconscious.	A woman is unable to recall that she was raped.
Regression	People behave as if they were at an earlier stage of development.	A boss has a temper tantrum when an employee makes a mistake.
Displacement	The expression of an unwanted feeling or thought is redirected from a more threatening powerful person to a weaker one.	A brother yells at his younger sister after a teacher gives him a bad grade.
Rationalization	People provide self-justifying explanations in place of the actual, but threatening, reason for their behavior.	A student who goes out drinking the night before a big test rationalizes his behavior by saying the test isn't all that important.
Denial	People refuse to accept or acknowledge an anxiety-producing piece of information.	A student refuses to believe that he has flunked a course.
Projection	People attribute unwanted impulses and feelings to someone else.	A man who is unfaithful to his wife and feels guilty suspects that his wife is unfaithful.
Sublimation	People divert unwanted impulses into socially approved thoughts, feelings, or behaviors.	A person with strong feelings of aggression becomes a soldier.
Reaction formation	Unconscious impulses are expressed as their opposite in consciousness.	A mother who unconsciously resents her child acts in an overly loving way toward the child.

Source: Feldman R (2013) Understanding Psychology. McGraw –Hill.



The Neo-Freudian Psychoanalysts: Building on Freud

- Psychoanalysts who were trained in traditional Freudian theory but who later rejected some of its major points



The Neo-Freudian Psychoanalysts: Building on Freud

- **Jung's collective unconscious:**
Common set of ideas, feelings, images, and symbols that we inherit from our relatives, the whole human race, and even animal ancestors from the past
 - **Archetypes:** Universal symbolic representations of a particular person, object, or experience

The Neo-Freudian Psychoanalysts: Building on Freud

- Horney's neo-freudian perspective
 - First feminist psychologist
 - Suggested that personality develops in the context of social relationships and depends particularly on the relationship between parents and child
 - Stressed the importance of cultural factors in the determination of personality



The Neo-Freudian Psychoanalysts: Building on Freud

- Adler and the other neo-freudians
 - Alfred Adler - Proposed that the primary human motivation is striving for superiority in a quest for self-improvement and perfection
 - Inferiority complex: Adults who have not been able to overcome the feelings of inferiority they developed as children
 - Erik Erikson
 - Anna Freud



Trait Approaches: Placing Labels on Personality

- **Trait theory:** Seeks to identify the basic traits necessary to describe personality
 - **Traits:** Consistent personality characteristics and behaviors displayed in different situations



Allport's trait theory: Identifying basic characteristics

Cardinal trait

- Single characteristic that directs most of a person's activities

Central trait

- Major characteristics of an individual

Secondary trait

- Affect behavior in fewer situations

Source: Feldman R (2013) Understanding Psychology. McGraw-Hill.

Cattell: Factoring Out Personality

- Factor analysis: Statistical method of identifying associations among a large number of variables to reveal more general patterns
 - Factors: Combinations of traits
- Cattell
 - Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF)



Eysenck: Factoring Out Personality

- Three major dimensions

Extraversion

- Relates to the degree of sociability

Neuroticism

- Encompasses emotional stability

Psychoticism

- Degree to which reality is distorted

Source: Feldman R (2013) Understanding Psychology. McGraw –Hill.

Big Five Personality Traits

Openness to experience

Independent—Conforming

Imaginative—Practical

Preference for variety—Preference for routine

Conscientiousness

Careful—Careless

Disciplined—Impulsive

Organized—Disorganized

Extraversion

Talkative—Quiet

Fun-loving—Sober

Sociable—Retiring

Agreeableness

Sympathetic—Fault-finding

Kind—Cold

Appreciative—Unfriendly

Neuroticism (Emotional Stability)

Stable—Tense

Calm—Anxious

Secure—Insecure

Source: Feldman R (2013) Understanding Psychology. McGraw-Hill.



Learning Approaches: We are What We've Learned

- B. F. Skinner's behaviorist approach
 - Personality is a collection of learned behavior patterns
 - Humans are infinitely changeable through the process of learning new behavior patterns



Learning Approaches: We are What We've Learned

- **Social cognitive approaches to personality:** Theories that emphasize the influence of a person's cognitions and observation of others' behavior, in determining personality
 - **Self-efficacy:** Belief that we have the personal capabilities to master a situation and produce positive outcomes



Learning Approaches: We are What We've Learned

- How much consistency exists in personality?
 - Walter Mischel
 - Personality is variable from one situation to another
 - Situationism
 - Cognitive-affective processing system theory (CAPS): People's thoughts and emotions about themselves and the world determine how they view, and then react, in situations



Learning Approaches: We are What We've Learned

- **Self-esteem:** The component of personality that encompasses our positive and negative self-evaluations
 - Relationship harmony: Sense of success in forming close bonds with other people



Humanistic Approaches: The Uniqueness of You

- Emphasize people's innate goodness and desire to achieve higher levels of functioning
- Carl Rogers
 - **Self-actualization:** State of self-fulfillment in which people realize their highest potential, each in a unique way
 - Self-concepts
 - **Unconditional positive regard:** Attitude of acceptance and respect on the part of an observer
 - Conditional positive regard

