
PSY1102

Introduction to Applied Psychology

Class 12

Personality

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Agenda for today

1. Personality: overview
2. Psychoanalytic perspective
 - a. Exploring the Unconscious
 - b. Neo-Freudian and psychodynamic theorists
 - c. Assessing unconscious processes
 - d. Evaluating the psychoanalytic perspective

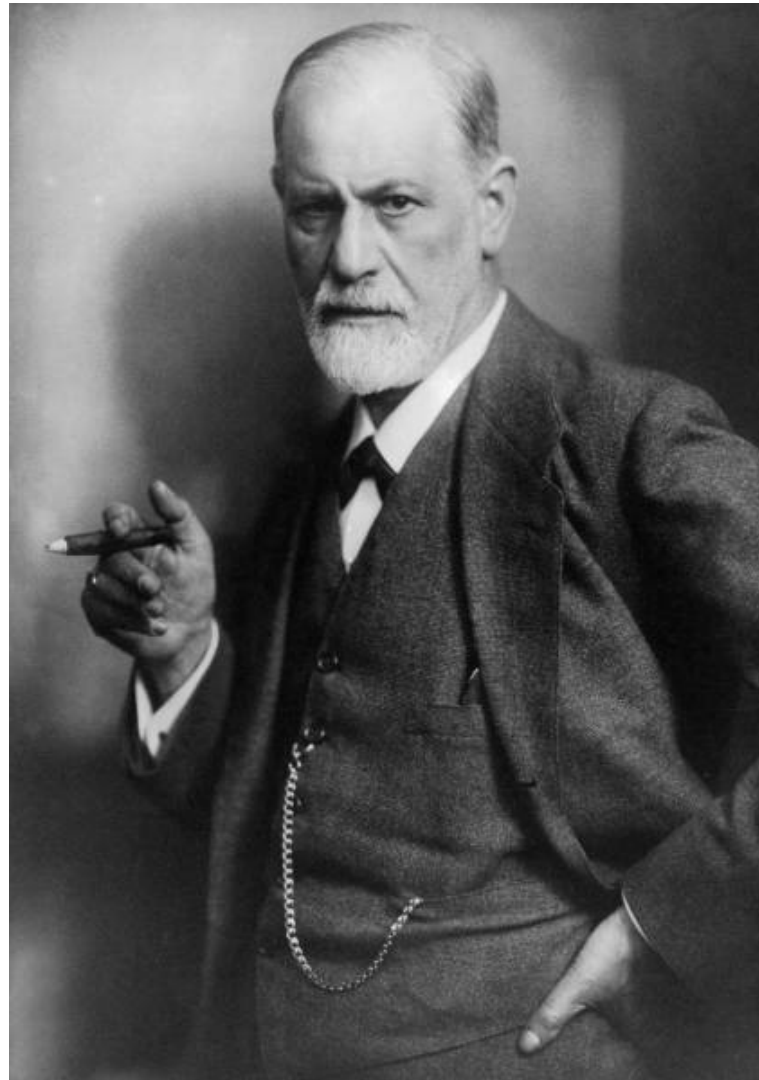
1. Personality: overview

- The textbook defines (p. 553) personality as “an individual’s characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting.”
- To what extent can you consider someone who is capricious and fickle a good friend, someone you can rely on when you need support? Would you choose such a person as a spouse?
- More likely, you want someone who is reliable and dependable – that is, someone whose behaviour and attitudes are predictable.

1. Personality: theoretical approaches

- Psychoanalytic perspective: Freud, Jung, Horney, and Adler, plus neo-Freudians and psychodynamic theorists.
- Humanistic perspective: Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and the “person”.
- Trait perspective: What are traits, how do we assess them, and what do they predict?
- Social-cognitive perspective: Evaluation of behaviour in a social context.

2. Psychoanalytic perspective



2. Psychoanalytic perspective

- Just as Copernicus, Newton and, later, Einstein revolutionised our way of viewing the Universe, so did Freud revolutionise our way of seeing the human being.
- Freud, a Viennese psychoanalyst (1856-1939), started as a physician who decided to specialise in “nervous disorders”.
- Freud soon realised that many of the nervous disorders his patients exhibited had no organic cause, so Freud embarked on a quest to understand the human animal.
- Freud was a determinist who believed that nothing ever happened by accident. The genius of Freud is that he proposed a sweeping view of all human behaviour, including “forbidden thoughts”, slips of the tongue, dreams, jokes, as well as the more usual, observable behaviours.

2a. Exploring the Unconscious

- When you watch another person, you are probably doing two things:
 - Making observations of their behaviour, and
 - Making inferences about their thoughts, attitudes, and motivations.
- We can observe behaviour; because of this, a video of someone's behaviour can be watched and interpreted by several people, who will generally agree what they see.
- By contrast, we make inferences about thoughts, attitudes, and motivations; they are not directly observable, and so we must rely on the person's testimony or on our interpretation of their behaviour.

2a. Exploring the Unconscious (continued)

- Freud hypothesised that some neurological disorders might have psychological causes. (Mind-body again.)
- Because psychological events are not directly observable, Freud's approach was to interview the person and take notes about their verbalisations and behaviour.
 - He wanted the person relaxed – hence a couch; and
 - To foster conversation, he tried hypnosis but later turned to free association as a tool.
- Freud's approach was to follow the person's utterances back to their point of origin, which would help him identify the cause(s) of their behaviour.
- Accordingly, he named his technique psychoanalysis.

2a. Exploring the Unconscious (continued)

- Freud's theory proposed that much of the dynamics driving our behaviour – that is, the unseen mental processes that result in an observable behaviour – are unconscious.
- The iceberg analogy works well:
 - Conscious processes (the part we are aware of) make up a small part of our Self; and
 - The larger part of our Self takes place in the preconscious or unconscious domains.
 - We can retrieve thoughts from the preconscious, but according to Freud the unconscious contains thoughts and feelings that are repressed and so are unavailable to conscious awareness.

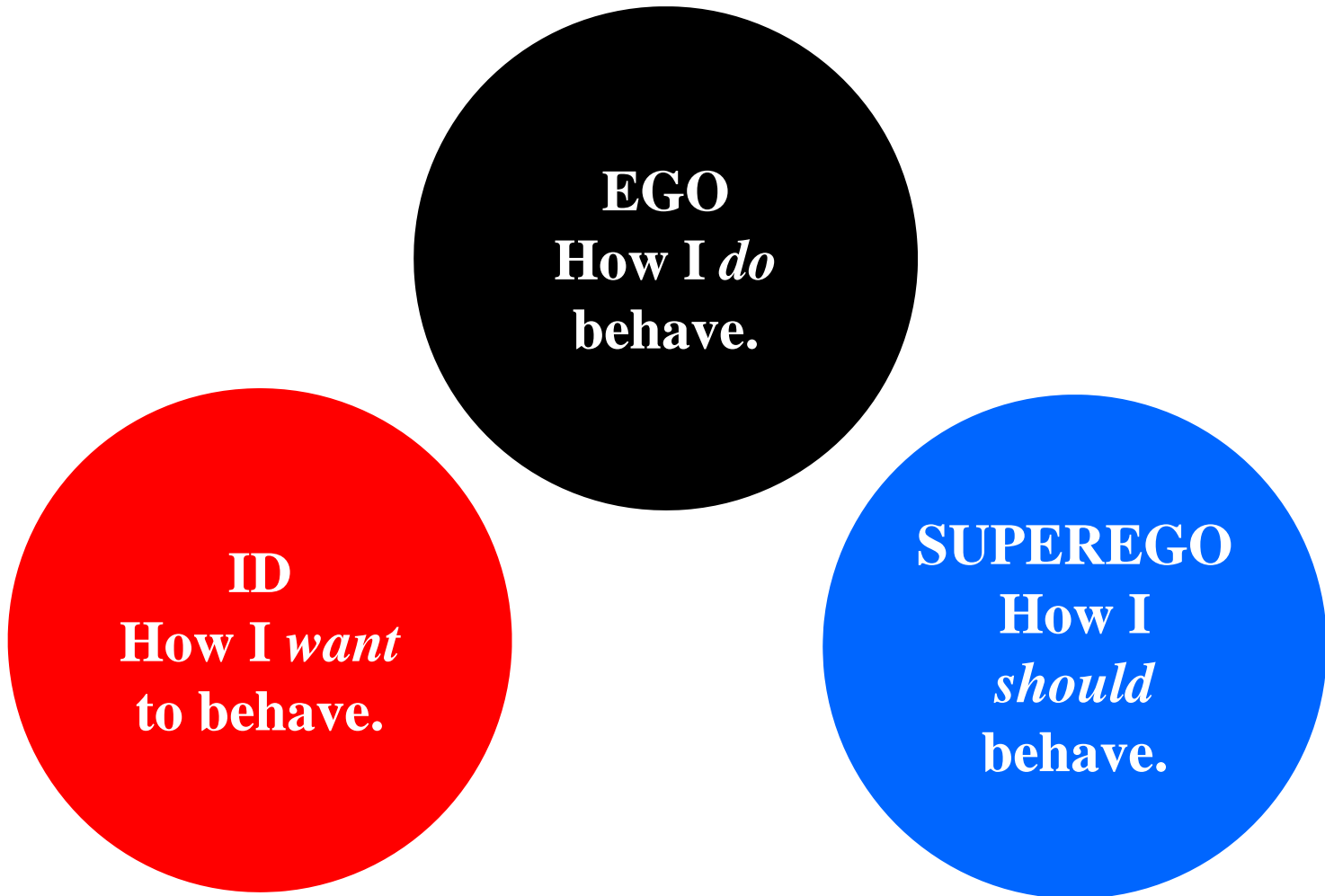
2a. Freud's personality structure

- Freud proposed that the human personality consisted of three parts:
 - The Id is the animalistic part of our personality, the part that deals with basic motivations, including sexual and aggressive drives. The Id is driven by unconscious psychic energy and operates according to the pleasure principle (“if it feels good, do it!”).
 - The Superego is the “conscience” of the personality – the “good angel” on one shoulder – that conforms to accepted moral standards and other ideals.
 - The Ego is, in a sense, the referee between the Id and the Superego. The Ego operates according to the reality principle and is largely conscious.

2a. Freud's personality structure: examples

- Sex. The Id wants to satisfy the sex drive, the Superego wants to adhere to moral principles, and so the Ego charts a courtship that may lead to sex but does so in a socially acceptable manner.
- Hunger.
 - A young child is hungry. Given food, s/he grabs it and shoves it into the mouth.
 - An adult at a gala, presented with finger food by waiters passing by with trays, takes one piece from each waiter and eats it delicately.
 - An adult who hasn't eaten for several hours says to a colleague, "I'm starving – let's go for some food," and they head off to a place that serves large portions in an informal atmosphere.

2a. Freud's Personality structure: the model



2a. Freud's personality development

- Freud posited that people pass through a series of psychosexual stages. Each stage is marked by the focus on an erogenous zone that provides sexual pleasure.
- The different stages are identified in Table 13.1 (p. 556) of the textbook:

Stage	Age	Focus
Oral	0-18 mo.	Pleasure centres on the mouth.
Anal	18-36 mo.	Pleasure focuses on bowel and bladder elimination and control.
Phallic	3-6 years	Pleasure zone is the genitals.
Latency	6 to puberty	Dormant sexual feelings.
Genital	Puberty on	Maturation of sexual interests

2a. Personality development: Oedipus complex

- The phallic stage occurs early in a boy's life, when he learns that he can derive pleasure from his penis. According to Freud, it is during this time that the boy is sexually attracted to his mother and sees his father as a competitor.
- This entire construct is called the Oedipus complex after the mythical Greek king who unknowingly killed his father and married his mother.
- A parallel complex in girls is the Electra complex.
- With time, this complex passes and the child enters a period of identification with the parent of the same sex, adopting the parent's values into the Superego.
- According to Freudian thinking, this contributes to our gender identity.

2a. Personality development: Females

- The existence of a phallic stage raises the question, “Yeah, but what about women?”
- The Greek word for uterus (hystera) has not only given English the word hysterectomy (removal of the uterus, typically in later years) but also hysteria, which in Freud’s time was synonymous with symptoms exhibited by women.
- It’s important to recall that Freud’s theory was developed in Vienna in the late 1800s. At that time (and some might argue that this has continued up to present times), female sexuality was less well understood.
- Repression of sexual feelings, lack of sexual satisfaction, and social proscriptions against self-satisfaction (i.e., masturbation) could act as contributing factors to “hysteria”.

2a. Freud's personality development

- Freud posited that unresolved conflicts during development could appear in adulthood as maladaptive behaviour.
- In his view, strong conflict fixate the person's pleasure-seeking behaviour at that stage.
- For example, an adult who smoked might be diagnosed as having fixated at the oral stage, who continued to seek oral gratification.

2a. Freud's personality development: an example

- Freud had an enduring interest in sexual traumas and emotions, seeing them as a key driving force in personality development.
- Accordingly, he reported discovering the ...
 - “posthumous operation of a sexual trauma in childhood. If the sexual experience occurs during the period of sexual immaturity and the memory of it is aroused during or after maturity, then the memory will have a far stronger excitatory effect than the experience did at the time it happened; and this is because in the meantime puberty has immensely increased the capacity of the sexual apparatus for reaction. *The traumas of childhood operate in a deferred fashion as though they were fresh experiences; but they do so unconsciously.*

Source: Freud, Sigmund. 1962 [1896]. "Further Remarks on the Neuro-Psychoses of Defense." In *Standard Edition*, vol. 3. London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, pp. 166–167; italics in original.

2a. Development and defence mechanisms

- Freud proposed that the personality developed defence mechanisms to cope with anxiety.
- These defence mechanisms acted by distorting reality. The textbook provides 7 examples (pp. 557-558).
 - Repression, or burial of anxiety-arousing wishes.
 - Regression, where we retreat in development (e.g., an anxious child reverting to thumb-sucking on the first day of school).
 - Reaction formation, where impulses are made to look opposite.
 - Projection, in which we “throw” threatening impulses to others.
 - Rationalisation, where we self-justify our actions (e.g., drinking to be sociable).
 - Displacement, where aggressive or sexual impulses are directed towards a more acceptable target.
 - Denial of the existence of a threatening impulse or event.

2b. Neo-Freudians

- Although Freud was the driving force behind the original version of psychoanalysis, three others became famous in their own right. They are known as neo-Freudians.
- As a group, the neo-Freudians differed from Freud in two principal ways:
 - They shifted control from the Unconscious to the conscious mind, and
 - They de-emphasised sex and aggression as all-important motivational forces, instead placing more emphasis on other motivations.

2b. Neo-Freudians (continued)

- Alfred Adler and Karen Horney argued that it is social, not sexual, tensions that make childhood so important in personality development.
- Adler (who coined the term inferiority complex) believed that power was important, and that it was the child's struggle to overcome feelings of inferiority that guided development.
- By contrast, Horney argued that it was childhood anxiety that drove our need for love and security. Horney – the only woman in the group – argued that:
 - Freud's concept of “penis envy” does not afflict women; and
 - Women do not have stronger Superegos than men.

2b. Neo-Freudians (continued)

- The third principal neo-Freudian is Carl Jung has perhaps the highest profile among the neo-Freudians.
- Jung agreed with Freud's notion of the Unconscious, but extended it to include the collective unconscious, a sort of racial repository of experiences. (Here, "race" refers to humanity.)
- In his classic *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, Jung makes the case for deep-seated issues of spirituality and symbolism, including especially myths and images shared across cultures.

2b. Psychodynamic theory

- Following Freud's death at the beginning of World War II, psychodynamic theory has incorporated some of his ideas but has generally moved away from Freud's idea that sex is the basis of the personality.
- However, they adhere to several of Freud's ideas, including:
 - The role of the Unconscious in our mental life;
 - The importance of internal struggles among our desires (Freud's Id), values (Freud's Superego), and fears; and
 - The importance of childhood in determining our adult personality and manner of attachment to others.

2c. Assessing unconscious processes

- If all of this stuff is happening in the Unconscious – which, by definition, we cannot access easily – how *do* we access it?
- Freud had proposed that the interpretation of dreams could help us tap into the Unconscious, as could free association.
- Just as we have developed intelligence tests to measure mental performance, so have psychoanalysts developed projective tests to probe unconscious content and processes.
- Projective tests provided the individual with ambiguous stimuli and asked him or her to interpret them.

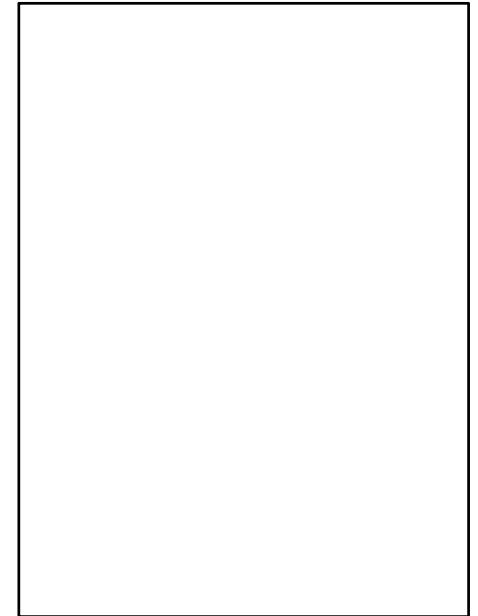
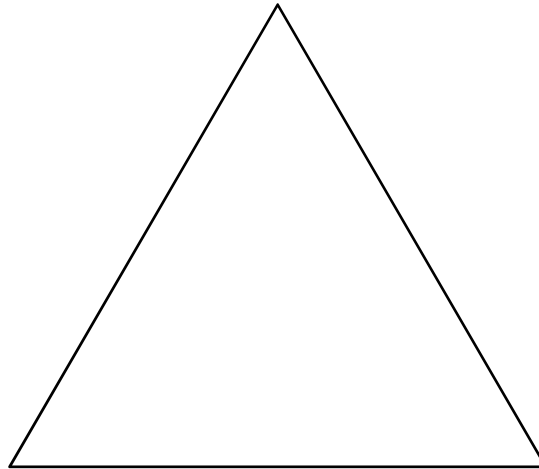
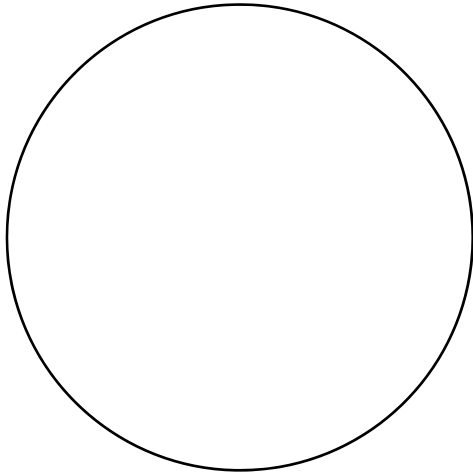
2c. Projective tests

- Two well known projective tests are the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) and the Rorschach inkblot test.
- In the TAT, the individual views a picture and makes up a story to accompany it.
 - One of the criteria of artistically interesting photographs or paintings is that they encourage the viewer to interpret them.
- In the Rorschach test, a person is shown an inkblot and asked to interpret it.
- The psychoanalyst uses the individual's responses as an indication of unconscious forces that are driving the response.



Hermann Rorschach
(source: Wikipedia)

2c. Projective tests: humorous example



2c. Projective tests: diagnostic value

- Joking aside, do projective tests have diagnostic value?
- On this topic, there is no consensus.
 - Supporters of projective tests see them as useful tools to stimulate vocalisations by individuals, where these vocalisations contribute to the degree of interaction between individual and psychotherapist.
 - Opponents see projective tests as potentially dangerous, providing opportunities for misinterpretation. These opponents argue that the tests are not reliable.
 - However, there is some consensus that this test can be useful in assessing anxiety and hostility.

2d. Evaluating the psychoanalytic perspective

- It is clear that, nearly 150 years after they were first proposed, some of Freud's ideas have not been supported by research.
- Specifically:
 - Development is now viewed as a lifelong process, not something that is fixed by our childhood;
 - Early post-natal development of the human nervous system is unlikely to support memories that will sculpt attitudes;
 - Gender identity occurs earlier than Freud proposed, and certainly before Oedipal resolution at age 5-6;
 - And so on.
- Moreover, since Freud's time sexuality has become less inhibited, but the incidence of psychological disorders has not lessened.

2d. Evaluating psychoanalysis: repression

- Do we repress traumatic experiences, and can this contribute to psychological disorders?
- However, it is clear that people who have experienced traumatic events are often unwilling to discuss them. For examples:
 - Soldiers or civilians who have experienced war directly; and
 - Children who have been subject to prolonged abuse.

(HYPOTHETICAL) CLASS EXERCISE

Who wants to volunteer to describe the details of a major traumatic event they have experienced?

2d. Modern view of the unconscious mind

- Much psychological research has made it abundantly clear that a large amount of our mental processes occurs without our direct knowledge, and hence may be called unconscious.
- The textbook lists (p. 562) some of the specific items that we perform unconsciously.
- Also, we have a tendency to see our own peculiarities as being shared by others (false consensus effect), when this is clearly not true. This is an example of a defence mechanism where we self-justify on slippery moral grounds:
 - Cheating on taxes or a spouse;
 - Speeding;
 - Using illegal substances.

2d. Freud's ideas as scientific theory: negative

- Is Freud's theory truly falsifiable, and are his hypotheses testable?
- One key criticism of Freud's theory is that it is based almost entirely on the interpretation of verbalisations by his patients, who – by their nature – were not “normal” by the standards of the time.
- Also, the theory does not predict behaviours, but only offers *post hoc* explanation.

2d. Freud's ideas as scientific theory: positive

- Through the very breadth of his approach, Freud broke the 19th-century model of the human mind and opened many new areas for exploration, including:
 - Unconscious processes;
 - Dreams;
 - Irrational thoughts;
 - Defence mechanisms;
 - Sexuality; and
 - The “goodness” of human beings.
- Perhaps most important, Freud's work opened an enduring discussion on these and other topics, and provided a model for conceptualising all human behaviour, conscious and unconscious.

Media sources for more information

- Psychoanalysis: *A Dangerous Method*, directed by David Cronenberg (2011), starring Viggo Mortensen, Keira Knightley, and Michael Fassbender.
- Sexual behaviour: *Kinsey*, directed by Bill Condon, starring Liam Neeson and Laura Linney (2004).
- Rorschach test: I don't usually cite Wikipedia as a source, but the Wikipedia article on the Rorschach test is pretty good and shows standard inkblots:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rorschach_test.

Summary: Class 12

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