Psychodynamic Approach

**Psychodynamic theory:** Freudian theory that unconscious forces determine behavior ([page 570](#)).

For example, forgetting to set the alarm clock to wake up in time for the test in the morning may reflect unconscious test anxiety, dislike for the course, etc. (but doesn’t rule out laziness, bad habits, lack of consciousness).
Do We All Speak Freud Here?
[Source: Peter Gay in the March 29, 1999 edition of Time p. 68.]

- **Penis envy**: Freud’s famous theory—not favored by feminists—that women wish they had what men are born with (a penis).
- **Freudian slip**: A seemingly meaningless slip of the tongue that is really e-mail direct from the unconscious.
- **Unconscious**: Repressed feelings, desires, ideas, and memories that are hidden from the conscious mind.
- **Repression**: Involuntary blocking of an unsettling feelings or memories from conscious thought.
- **Oedipus complex**: In classic Freudian theory, children in their phallic phase (ages three to six) form an erotic attachment to the parent of the opposite sex, and a concomitant hatred (occasionally murderous) of the parent of the same sex.
- **Castration anxiety**: A boy’s unconscious fear of losing his penis and his fantasy that girls have already lost theirs.
- **Sublimation**: Unconscious shifting of an unacceptable drive (lust for your sister, say) into culturally acceptable behavior (lust for your friend’s sister).
- **Transference**: Unconscious shifting of feelings about one person in authority (e.g., a parent) to another (e.g., your analyst).
- **Id**: The part of the mind from which primal needs and drives (e.g., lust, rage) emerge.
- **Superego**: The part of the mind where your parents’ and society’s rules reside; the original guilt trip.
- **Ego**: The mind’s mechanism for keeping in touch with reality, it referees the wrestling match between id and superego.
- **Phallic symbols**: Almost anything can look like a penis, but sometimes, as Freud is supposed to have remarked, “A cigar is just a cigar.”

What are other Freudian terms still with us?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixation</th>
<th>Catharsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libido</td>
<td>Anal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the language is so pervasive in society, it gives credibility to the theory and belief. Does the data support Freud?
Psychodynamic Approach

• Psychodynamic theories emphasize unconscious and dynamic processes

“Good morning, beheaded—uh, I mean beloved.”

Lindsay Fünke  Tobias Fünke
# Freud’s Structure of Personality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of personality</th>
<th>Level of Consciousness</th>
<th>Description or Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Ego**               | Mostly conscious such as  
• thoughts and  
• perceptions        | In psychodynamic theory, the component of personality that tries to satisfy the wishes of the id while being responsible to the dictates of the superego (page 571). |
| **Superego**          | All levels, but mostly preconscious such as  
• memories and  
• stored knowledge | In psychodynamic theory, the internalization of societal and parental standards of conduct (page 571). |
| **Id**                | Unconscious such as:  
• Fears  
• Unacceptable sexual desires  
• Violent motives  
• Irrational wishes  
• Immoral urges  
• Selfish needs | In psychodynamic theory, the component of personality that is completely submerged in the unconscious and operates according to the pleasure principle (page 570). |
Id, Superego and Ego

- How would the id respond?
- How would the superego respond?
- How would the ego respond?
Freudian Defense Mechanisms

superego

id
Freudian Defense Mechanisms

According to Freud, the ego can usually deal with the demands of the superego and the id. To keep unconscious desires (sexual and aggressive) unconscious, we need to expend a lot of psychological energy to do this.

Neurosis occurs when we are required to expend an excessive amount of energy to repress these desires. Eventually, the ego becomes too taxed and the demands of the idealized self (superego) and the impulsive self (id) overwhelm the rational self (ego).

When the ego is overwhelmed and can’t find a compromise between the superego and id, the rational self (ego) can temporarily reduce this anxiety by distorting your thoughts and perception of reality.
These distortions can help you maintain an integrated self while searching for a realistic and acceptable solution for the conflict between the superego and id that produces anxiety (also you also might think of it in terms of humanist theory when your experiences are inconsistent with your self-concept).

Although most psychologists don’t think that there is literally an id, ego and superego, most would agree that anxiety and that people use ego defense mechanisms to reduce anxiety to deal with traumatic events, past failures, or embarrassments. The use of defense mechanisms is very common. Many psychologically healthy individuals temporarily use defense mechanisms to deal with stressful events (Chapter 11: Health and Well-Being).

However, when defense mechanism delay continually distort “reality” or interfere with our use of more constructive coping strategies, they can be counterproductive and keep us from learning from experience. Why?
# Major Ego Defense Mechanisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Source of anxiety</th>
<th>Defense mechanism to reduce anxiety</th>
<th>Name of the defense mechanism</th>
<th>How the defense mechanism works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A team of doctors has diagnosed a man with cancer.</td>
<td>but he won’t acknowledge that he has cancer</td>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>The ego refuses to acknowledge anxiety producing realities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A young girl was sexually abused by her uncle.</td>
<td>As an adult, she can’t remember anything about the traumatic experience.</td>
<td>Repression</td>
<td>The master defense mechanism; the ego pushes unacceptable impulses out of awareness, back into the unconscious mind.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie Sheen had problems that led to the temporary production delay of 2 ½ Men</td>
<td>Accused everyone else of creating delays in the show.</td>
<td>Projection</td>
<td>The ego attributes personal shortcomings, problems, and faults to others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A woman who fears her sexual urges</td>
<td>becomes a religious zealot</td>
<td>Reaction formation</td>
<td>The ego transforms an unacceptable motive into its opposite.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A college student does not get into the fraternity of his choice.</td>
<td>He says that isn’t wasn’t that good of a fraternity anyway.</td>
<td>Rationalization</td>
<td>The ego replaces a less acceptable motive with a more acceptable one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A woman can’t take her anger out on her boss.</td>
<td>so she goes home and takes it out on her husband</td>
<td>Displacement</td>
<td>The ego shifts feelings toward an unacceptable object to another more acceptable object.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A woman with strong sexual urges</td>
<td>becomes an artist who paints nudes.</td>
<td>Sublimation</td>
<td>The ego replaces an unacceptable impulse with a socially acceptable one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every time she and her husband have a big argument</td>
<td>A woman returns home to her mother</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>The ego seeks the security of an earlier developmental period in the face of stress.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A woman who gets a tax refund by cheating on her taxes following Sunday</td>
<td>makes a larger than usual donation to the church collection on the Sunday</td>
<td>Undoing</td>
<td>A form of unconscious repentance that involves neutralizing or atoning for an unacceptable action or thought with a second action or thought</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identify the defense mechanism

- Denial
- Projection
- Rationalization
- Sublimation
- Undoing

- Repression
- Reaction formation
- Displacement
- Regression
Identify the Ego Defense Mechanisms

- Denial
- Projection
- Rationalization
- Regression
- Repression
- Reaction Formation
- Displacement

![Image source: Psychology 5th edition, Myers]
Identify the following Ego Defense Mechanisms

1. Anne’s car broke down. Since she does not have enough money for repairs, she must leave an hour earlier to ride her bicycle or walk to work. Anne commented that she enjoys the exercise and saving the gas and oil money.

2. Chad had stopped sucking his thumb by the time he was four. At age seven he was told that his parents were divorcing and he would be living with his mother and a “new father.” Chad began sucking his thumb again.

3. Martin was cutting wood and injured his hand with his chainsaw. While driving to the emergency room of a local hospital, he recalled the painful shots he received during his last visit. He missed the turn to the hospital and had to ask for directions to find it.

4. Eric is a big spender. He tips heavily, buys extravagant gifts, and often gambles. When is thrifty wife bought materials to make new kitchen curtains, he accused her of squandering money needlessly. He claimed the old worn curtains were adequate and said she was wasting our money.

5. Little Suzi was upset when her mother spanked her. She ran to her toy crib and smacked her doll

6. Jeremy has always been a problem to his mother. He never keeps rules and argues with her constantly. In choosing a tattoo, he selected a large heart with “Mom” in the center to show his affection for her.

7. Whenever Elizabeth is angry she heads for her piano. She has composed several outstanding jazz tunes.
Is homophobia an indicator of latent homosexuality?

Homophobia consists of feelings of fear, discomfort and aversion that some people experience in interacting with gay individuals. Psychoanalytic theorists have argued that homophobia among men may be rooted in anxiety about the possibility of being homosexual. Psychoanalysts argue that homophobia results from repression of one’s latent homosexuality and reaction formation, which leads some men to accentuate their masculinity and to be especially hostile towards gays.

The following two groups (heterosexual, highly homophobic men compared with heterosexual, low homophobic men) watched three types of explicit sexually erotic videos and measured their sexual arousal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differences in Sexual Arousal to Erotic Videos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High homophobic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Low homophobic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Difference in arousal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the highly homophobic men were physiologically more aroused by video of male homosexual activity, their self-report of sexual arousal was similar to those low in homophobia.