

Psych Notes for Week of April 8th

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- Personality is the outcome of hundreds of causal factors: genetic, prenatal, parenting, peer influences, life stressors, and plain old luck, both good and bad

Personality: What is it and how can we study it?

- Fundamental Attribution Theory – The tendency to attribute too much of others' behavior to their dispositions, including their personalities, and not enough to the situations they confront.
- Personality – People's typical ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving.
- Traits – Relatively enduring predispositions that influence our behavior across many situations. Account in part for consistencies in our behavior, across both time and situations.
- Two major approaches to studying personality:
 - Nomothetic Approach – Strives to understand personality by identifying general laws that govern the behavior of all individuals
 - Idiographic Approach – Strives to understand personality by identifying the unique configuration of characteristics and life history experience within a person.
- Behavior-genetic methods help psychologists to disentangle three broad influences on personality:
 - Genetic factors
 - Shared environmental factors – Experiences that make individuals within the same family more alike
 - Nonshared environmental factors – Experiences that make individuals within the same family less alike.

Investigating the Causes of Personality: Overview of Twin and Adoption Studies

- A higher correlation of a trait among identical than fraternal twins suggests a genetic influence
- Identical twin correlations that are equal to or less than fraternal twin correlations suggest the absence of a genetic component, and instead point to nonshared environmental influences.
- Anxiety proneness, impulse control, and traditionalisms are commonly influenced substantially by genetic factors.
- Identical twins reared apart tend to be strikingly similar in their personality traits and are far more similar than fraternal twins reared apart.
- Identical twins reared apart are about as similar as identical twins reared together.
- Shared environment plays little or no role in adult personality
- Adoption Studies – Permit investigators to separate the effects of genes and environment by examining children who were separated at an early age from their biological families.
- The finding that an adopted child's personality is similar to that of his or her biological parents points to genetic influence

- The finding that an adopted child's personality is similar to that of his or her adoptive parents points to shared environmental influence.
- Sociability – The extent to which people enjoy being with others
- The correlations between biological parents and their adopted away children in their sociability levels are slightly higher than the correlations between adoptive parents and their adopted children even though the biological parents had essentially no environmental contact with their children after birth.
- Being raised together doesn't lead to much similarity in personality between parents and offspring.

Birth Order: Does it matter?

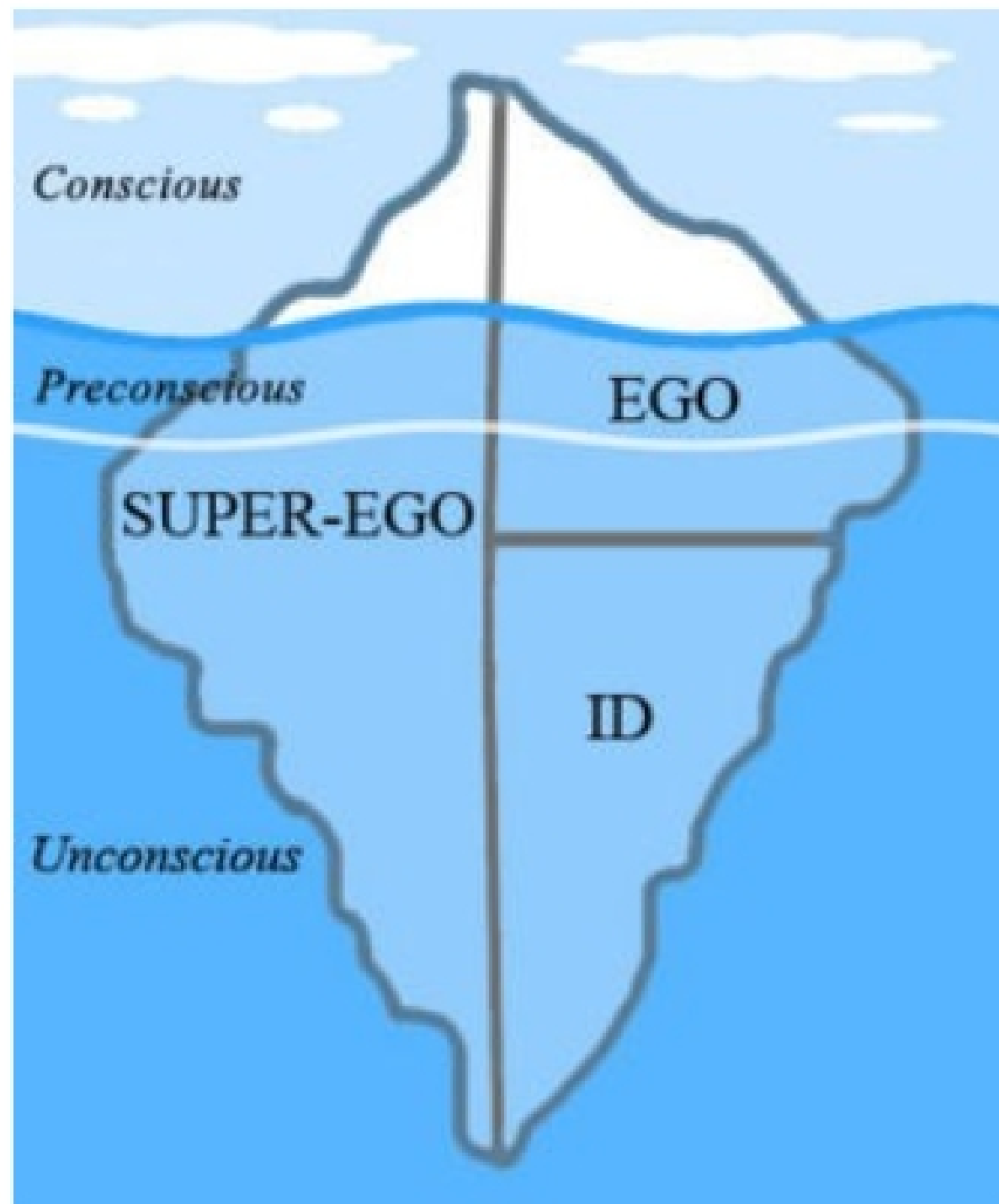
- Overall still being disputed but found that it generally does not matter

Behavior-Genetic Studies: A Note of Caution

- Molecular Genetic Studies- May allow scientists to pinpoint which genes are associated with specific personality traits. Rest on two premises:
 - Genes code for proteins that in turn often influence the functioning of neurotransmitters, like dopamine and serotonin.
 - The functioning of many neurotransmitters is associated with certain personality traits.
 - Novelty Seeking – A trait that refers to the tendency to search out and enjoy new experiences → Found to be related with dopamine

Psychoanalytic Theory: The Controversial Legacy of Sigmund Freud and His Followers

- Psychologists, psychiatrists, and many other thinkers had generated theoretical models that sought to explain the development and working of personality. These models address three key questions:
 - How do our personalities develop?
 - What are the core driving forces in our personalities or, more informally, what makes us tick?
 - What accounts for individual differences in personality?
- Four influential models of personality:
- Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory – Many mental disorders were produced by psychological rather than physiological factors. Rests on three core assumptions:
 - Psychic Determinism – The assumption that all psychological events have a cause.
 - Symbolic Meaning – No action, no matter how seemingly trivial, is meaningless.
 - Unconscious Motivation – We rarely understand why we do what we do, although we quite readily cook up explanations for our actions after the fact.



The Id, Ego, and Superego: The Structure of Personality

- Freud hypothesized that the human psyche consists of three agencies or components:
 - The Id: Basic Instincts – The reservoir of our most primitive impulses; entirely unconscious, part of iceberg completely submerged. Sex and aggression.
 - Pleasure Principle – Strives for immediate gratification.
 - The Ego: The Boss – The boss of the personality, its principal decision maker. Primary tasks are interacting with the real world and finding ways to resolve the competing demands of the other two psychic agencies.
 - Reality principle – Strives to delay gratification until it can find an appropriate outlet.
 - The Superego: Moral Standards – Our sense of morality. Sense of right and wrong.

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Trait Models of Personality: Consistencies in Our Behavior

- Trait theorists aim to pinpoint the major traits of personality

Identifying Traits: Factor Analysis