

The Id, Ego, Superego: Freud's influence on all ages in the media

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Introduction

This paper focuses on the parallel of Freudian trios frequent in movies surrounded in the theoretical world of youth, young-adult, and adult qualities. Within the film industry there are different directions of content, which specifically relate to the generational gaps in entertainment.

As people age, they become interested in different styles of film. For instance, a young adult would not be as likely to watch a Disney movie as a child, and an adult would be less likely to watch a “bro-film.” Part of why people are attracted to certain films as they age is because of the type of person they are. As a child, one is more likely to be drawn to things that make you happy such as a kid’s movie, which represents the Id. As a young adult, teenager, one is more likely to watch movies that will define how they should act. These can be categorized as “bro-films” or “rom-coms”. The idea of acting how society wants you to mirrors the characteristics of a Superego. Adults differ from both of these because they tend to understand that they cannot do whatever makes them happy, but they also can differ from the norm of society. They tend to be a combination of both the Id and the Superego - the Ego. That is why adults tend to watch films that all generations enjoy such as famous franchises like *Star Wars*.

The space between these ages are not only important in film, they are based on Freudian ideas. These gaps are represented accordingly by the use of Sigmund Freud’s theoretical trio - the Id, Ego and Superego - which have become prevalent in films in recent years, and can help audiences connect at different age ranges: the Id as children, the Ego as young adults, and the Superego as older adults.

The ego and the superego

In his article, *The Ego and the Superego*, Sigmund Freud's (Ego Ideal) poses the concept of the Id, Ego and Superego. To begin, he discusses the idea of the Id (Freud, 1923, p. 20). According to Freud, everybody has a subconscious level of character that they act upon (Freud, 1923, p. 21). Because it is subconscious, it is what the person truly wants to do, say, or experience (Freud, 1923, p. 20). These characteristics can usually be seen in children. They act on impulse and do what makes them happy

The Superego, or the ideal ego, is essentially the opposite of the Id (Freud, 1923, p. 30). It is the idea of wanting to be a certain way subconsciously, but acknowledging that one cannot be that way for different reasons (Freud, 1923, p. 30). The Superego is a representation of the outside world (Freud, 1923). It focuses on what other people expect of someone in society. Freud explains it as, "the ego ideal answers to everything that is expected of the higher nature of man" (Freud, 1923, p. 33). The Superego of the trio usually is far too focused on what other people see them as, such as young adults and teenagers.

The concept of the Ego is brought up in the second segment of the article, however it is the combination of both of these concepts - the Id and the Superego (Freud, 1923, p. 22). The ego takes the place of what the Id cannot have, but does not think as straightforward as the Superego (Freud, 1923). Essentially the Ego is the only type of person that can think in gray, not just black and white (Freud, 1923). These people tend to have more experience and be in an older age range. Therefore, the Ego tends to be more relatable than the overwhelming Id and the self-conscious superego.

Walt meets the id

Freud's trio has heavily influenced one of the most famous and household names in entertainment. Walt Disney's' films have been analyzed and criticized throughout our multimedia history for placing sexual innuendos and subliminal messages into their high grossing children's films. But the reason for this may lie in Disney's incorporation of Freudian concepts, like the id, into their movie character development (Berland, 2004).

"Disney and Freud: Walt Meets the Id" is an article digging into the influence of Freudian concepts on the creation of Disney films. The author, David Berland, states that since Freud and Walt were both curating and publishing their works in the early 1920s, that an overspill of ideas and a form of "theoretical plagiarism" took place (Berland, 2004, p. 4). In every film made since those early nineteen twenties, Disney produces the obvious protagonist and the antagonist, both characters usually have a counterpart or two that work alongside them to overcome an obstacle or reach a pivotal moment of realization.

The Freudian Id emerges as the main hero or villain acts upon their own inclinations and wants for either good or evil. The use of character development limited at the Id level helps younger viewers connect and understand the one dimensional character. Since Freud argues that the Id is the subconscious craving of things that make someone happy, it makes sense that children would feel connected to the Id characters in Disney movies.

Beyond boobs and beer: Analysis of masculine rites of passage in the “bro-film”***Superbad***

Aforementioned, the role of the Ego is one's inclusion in something that is restricted to them but not being realizing that it cannot be logically achieved. In today's society, there is a large standard for young adults to craft themselves into a certain image to fit in with peers and satisfy the social norm. As society's standards change with age, so follows the content being produced to further that sense of belonging. For example, the film *Superbad* is one of many that specifically target the “impressionable emerging male population” by the manipulation of the media to influence young teen boys and what it is like to partake in “idealized masculinity” as they are getting older (Huemmer, 2014, p.4). The “bro-films” similar to this one combine the theme of friendship with the selfish pursuits of younger teen films (Huemmer, 2014, p.2). This unique combination is a breeding ground for the “rite of passage” commonly found within very diverse societies (Hummer, 2014, p.12). This is heavily depicted within these “bro-films” through the use of consistent character types, setting, presentation/iconic imagery, and themes (Hummer, 2014). The use of these elements in films help form the aspects of what it means to fit the role of an emerging adult in society. In the diverse environments, the rite of passage is most commonly associated with heterosexual relations which, determine a man's sexual development (Huemmer, 2014, p. 36). Again being depicted in the film *Superbad* is this object of pursuit, a woman, which allows the male characters to establish their dominant patriarchal role in their environment.

Although this genre of “bro-films” parallels the real world situations looming on young adults and the standards to be met when reaching this stage in their life, the films

also incorporate a guiding Superego aspect to the story (Huemmer, 2014, p. 42). This Superego-like guide often times is present to show that once you complete this rite of passage into manhood, the testing and proving one's dominance is not over, it means that a person reaches the point in life where they recognize what it was like to be a young adult and are realistic in terms of what it means to be the ideal version of themselves (Huemmer, 2014).

Star Wars: A myth of our time

Star Wars has caught the attention of audiences worldwide since 1977 and the buzz is still strong in 2016. What makes *Star Wars* is its fan base which ranges from young children to dedicated fans who have been there from the start. With the resurgence of *Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace* in the year 1999, George Lucas has introduced the story to new generations by releasing a new episode every four years and connecting with the relatives of the 1977 sensation and continues to do so.

Appealing to both young and adult audiences, this revival of such a successful franchise became huge within the media. Andrew Gordon stated

Well if *Star Wars* is childish, then so are *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Like Tolkien's *Middle Earth* series, *Star Wars* is a modern fairy tale, a pastiche which reworks a multitude of old stories, and yet creates a complete and self-sufficient world of its own, one populated with intentionally flat, archetypal and characters: reluctant young hero, warrior wizard, brave and beautiful princess, and monstrous black villain. I would argue that the movie's fundamental appeal to

both young and old lies precisely in its deliberately old-fashioned plot, which has its roots deep in American popular fantasy. (Gordon, 1978, p. 80)

The original *Star Wars* trilogy has a web of characters that represent the Id, Ego, and Superego Freudian concepts. The lead heroes were separated from the Imperials, with each side possessing their own Id, Ego, and Superego. For example, Luke may be a balanced ego for the Jedi's, while Darth Vader is considered the ego for the Imperials (Gordon, 1978). Both of these characters are the mature and important characters on the respective sides. This emphasizes the importance of being morally "good."

Lucas learned how to develop as a writer by studying Edgar Rice Burroughs' literary pattern, then *Flash Gordon* established the cinematic conventions for space opera. The theme from *Flash Gordon* influences *Star Wars*, "from the theme to the pacing (a climax every fifteen minutes) to the quick, dead readings by many of the movie's bit players, even to the visual 'punctuation' (wipes, fast dissolves, etc.) (Gordon, 1978, p. 78)" George Lucas used elements he learned watching television shows in the 1950s and applied that knowledge towards creating his own masterpiece, which arguably created the largest franchise in movie history. The use of Id, Ego and the Superego are also a part of why people are still captivated by the brand.

Conclusion

The gap between age groups can be represented by the use of Sigmund Freud's theoretical trio - the Id, Ego and Superego - which have become prevalent in films in recent years, and can help audiences connect at different age ranges: the Id as children, the Ego as young adults, and the Superego as older adults. The generations are able to picture themselves as the characters portrayed in the genres they favor due to their level

of maturity and acceptance of the target audience of films like Disney, “bro-films,” and multi-generational franchises. Categories as such have gained their popularity for a reason, the writers are able to pinpoint specific psychological references of their audience and feed off of society’s standard of them. By doing this, screenwriters and directors can subconsciously reach the theoretical world of youth, young-adult, and adult qualities within the viewer. These techniques inspired by a theory from Sigmund Freud has immersed audiences since its inception in the entertainment industry and will continue to do so for years to come.

References

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