

# Personality Profiling – What Lies Beneath?



Australian Institute of  
Training and Development



**LIZ PAYNE**  
**CONSULTING**

© 2014 Liz Payne Consulting

# Outcomes & Objectives

Session Aim – To build your understanding of personality theory with a view to helping you make a more informed choice about the multitude of tools on the market.

Session Outcomes –

By the end of the workshop, you should have a broad understanding of:

1. personality theory and how it has evolved;
2. how personality theory has impacted profiling tools; and
3. how to apply this insight to help choose the most appropriate tool for your situation.

# Why look at Theory?

- Theory is the foundation upon which tests are built
- Theory enables you to interpret the results
- Theory provides a focus for development
- Theory informs selection decisions
- Theory is the lens through which participants see themselves and others
- Theory can build credibility and acceptance

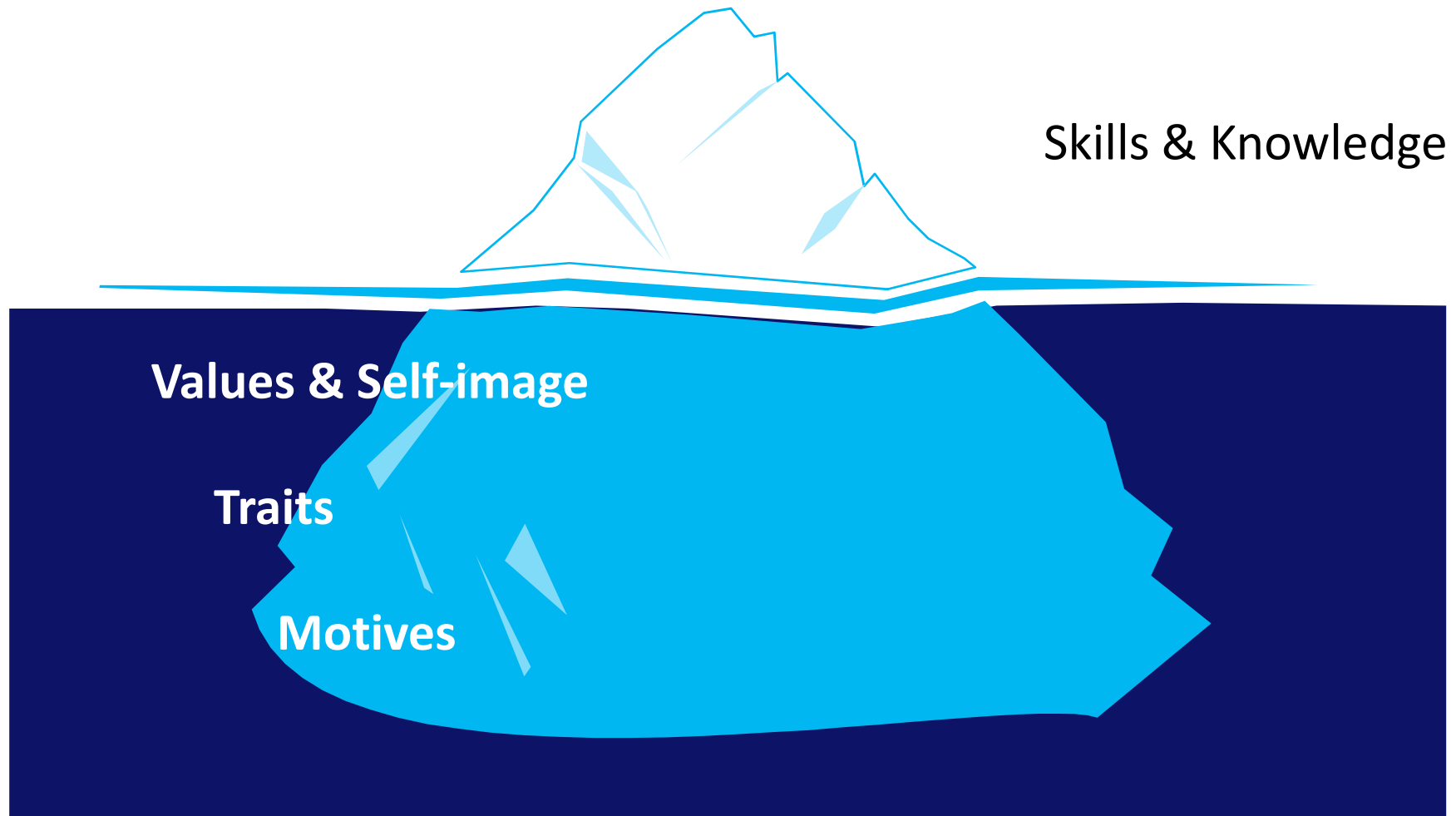
# Challenges when Looking at Personality Theory in Relation to Profiling

- Not all tests measure personality
- Some tests are designed to implement a specific theory
- Others are a synthesis of different theories
- While others are based on a more intuitive understanding of personality
- Even tests that do measure personality are often based on varying definitions

# What is Personality?

- “What an individual really is ... an internal ‘something’ that guides and directs all human activity” Allport (1937)
- “That which permits a prediction of what a person will do in a given situation” Cattell (1950)
- “A behavioural posture” Cronbach (1955)
- “An individual’s characteristic pattern of thoughts, emotions, and behaviour, together with the psychological mechanisms – hidden or not – behind those patterns” Funder (2001)

# Iceberg model of Personality



# Prominent Personality Theories

- Psychodynamic approach and responses to it
- Behaviourism
- Humanistic theories
- Social-Cognitive Learning theories
- Trait theory
- Neurological approaches
- Positive Psychology

# Psychodynamic approach and responses to it

Highlights	Impact on Modern Day Testing
Sigmund Freud's first comprehensive theory of Personality early 1900s	Tests identifying underlying motives & concerns e.g. Thematic Apperception Tests
Carl Jung (1921) 'Psychological Types'	Popularity of type based assessments e.g. MBTI and DISC
Modern neo-Freudians inc. Karen Horney 'Theory of the Self'	Specific measures e.g. the CAD & integration into other models e.g. LSI



# Behaviourism

Highlights	Impact on Modern Day Testing
Focus on the observable behaviour of people (and animals)	Provided the foundation for behavioural competencies and associated tests e.g. 360 degree assessments
Commitment to using rigorous experimental methods	Highlighted the importance of objectivity and rigour in personality testing
Avoids hypotheses around individuals' thoughts and beliefs	Provided the foundation for modern day psychometrics

# Humanism

Highlights	Impact on Modern Day Testing
Maslow (1962) people are motivated towards personal growth and self-actualisation	Provided the foundation for Positive Psychology and strengths based assessments
Emphasises the positive, healthy aspects of personality and the uniqueness of individual	Specific measures to assess an individual's degree of self-actualisation e.g. Personal Orientation Inventory (POI)
States that human nature is inherently good	Self-esteem and self-actualisation integrated into other models e.g. LSI

# Social-Cognitive Theories

Highlights	Impact on Modern Day Testing
Claims that learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context	Provided the foundation for Learning Styles assessments
Emphasises learning through observation and imitating the actions of others	Lack of confidence in personality testing in the 1970s and 1980s
Walter Mischel's revolution highlighted the role of "situational factors."	Selection testing began to encompass the concept of 'fit' - job and organisational (1990s)

# Trait Theories

Highlights	Impact on Modern Day Testing
Traits are dimensions of personality that influence a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviours	Popularity of trait based assessments e.g. SHL OPQ32 and Hogan HPI
Traits are highly stable and people have them in different degrees	Multi-dimensional measures provide detailed understanding of individuals
Most psychometric assessments see personality as a combination of traits	Rigour provides greater capacity to predict performance outcomes

# Neurological Approaches

Highlights	Impact on Modern Day Testing
Explores the extent to which neurological activity and brain structures explain individual differences	Provides the foundation for clinical tests e.g. WAIS, Wisconsin Card Sort Test
Dates back to the ancient Greeks e.g. Hippocrates	Provides the foundation for workplace tests e.g. HBDI, PRISM
Is constantly evolving, based on research and is highly scientific	Scientific basis can build credibility with participants

# Positive Psychology

Highlights	Impact on Modern Day Testing
Focuses on the promotion of mental health rather than merely treating illness	Current popularity of strengths based assessments e.g. the VIA Survey, Realise2
Includes concepts such as Learned Helplessness, Flow and Flourishing	Shift in approach to feedback. Encourages a focus on individuals' strengths.
Emphasises research and scientific-based theories	Stronger empirical foundation for humanistic based assessments

# How does this impact your decision making?

1. Which theoretical approaches lend themselves to:
  - selection? Why?
  - team building? Why?
  - development? Why?
2. Are there any theoretical approaches that appeal to you personally or would likely appeal to your organisation/ team? Why?
3. What others factors would you consider when selecting a tool?

# Some Things to Consider when Considering the Theory Behind a Tool

- Theory is only one factor to consider when determining your choice of profiling tools
- All theories have their critics
- A strong theoretical foundation does not necessarily mean the test is robust
- Ensure that the link between the theory and the test is sound



# Thank you...

For 7 Tips for Choosing the Right Psychometric  
or Personality Profiling Tool visit  
'That's my Theory' at:

[www.lizpayneconsulting.com](http://www.lizpayneconsulting.com)

I would love to hear from you at:

[liz@lizpayneconsulting.com](mailto:liz@lizpayneconsulting.com)

0433 197277

@thatsmytheory