

2. Review of Related Literature

In this chapter, I will review the related theories that are used to analyze the main character's way on developing defense mechanisms in order to survive the ordeal of his childhood. This review focuses on psychoanalysis theory, particularly on its discussion about the way an individual covers him/herself from the pressures which come from the surrounding, namely the defense mechanism of the ego. Theory of defense mechanism is directly aimed to help the analysis of the main character, Frank McCourt, in the novel.

2.1 Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is a system of psychology originated by the Viennese physician Sigmund Freud in the 1890s and then further developed by himself, his students, and other followers. According to Guerin (1992), the foundation of Freud's contribution to modern psychology is his emphasis on the unconscious aspects of the human psyche (p.118).

Psychoanalysis began with the discovery that hysteria, an illness with physical symptoms that occurred in a completely healthy physical body such as a numbness or paralysis of a limb or a loss of voice or a blindness could be caused by unconscious wishes or forgotten memories. (Hysteria is now commonly referred to as conversion disorder). The French neurologist Jean Martin Charcot tried to rid the mind of undesirable thoughts through hypnotic suggestion but without lasting success. Traditional psychoanalytic theory states that all human beings are born with instinctual drives that are constantly active even though a person is usually not conscious of thus being driven.

In considering the human personality as a whole, Freud (<http://homepage.eircom.net/~petecassidy/psychoanalysis/html/figures.html>) divided it into three functional parts: id, ego, and superego. He saw the id as the deepest level of the unconscious, dominated by the pleasure principle, with its object the immediate gratification of instinctual drives. The superego, originating in the child through an identification with parents, and in response to social pressures, functions as an internal censor to repress the urges of the id. The ego,

on the other hand, is seen as a part of the id modified by contact with the external world (Guerin, 1992, p.118). It is a mental agent mediating among three contending forces: the outside demands of social pressure or reality, libidinal demands for immediate satisfaction arising from the id, and the moral demands of the superego. Although considered only partly conscious, the ego constitutes the major part of what is commonly referred to as consciousness. Freud asserted that conflicts between these often-opposing components of the human mind are crucial factors in the development of neurosis.

2.2 Defense Mechanism

In the psychoanalysis perspective, any of a variety of unconscious personality reactions which the ego uses to protect the conscious mind from threatening feelings and perceptions, becomes a force which moves an individual. Sigmund Freud first used defense as a psychoanalytic term (1894), but he did not break the notion into categories, viewing it as a singular phenomenon of repression. His daughter, Anna Freud, expanded on his theories in the 1930s, distinguishing some of the major defense mechanisms recognized today.

Responding to stress generally takes one of two forms: defending or coping (Weber, 1991, p. 185). Defending behaviors reduces the stress or anxiety without eliminating the source. Meanwhile, coping responses restore balance and remove the threat. By definition, defense mechanisms are the behavioral strategies or responses made to alleviate or reduce anxiety (Weber, 1991, p.195).

According to Garling & Valsiner (1985), in order to analyze one's way in responding to stress, we must also pay attention to his surroundings. Further, Garling & Valsiner (1985), noted we must pay attention to the surrounding because such a man-made systemic environment is inseparable from the life of contemporary human beings (p.1).

The most interesting example of the employment of the defense mechanism of the ego is from the victims of the holocaust during World War II. This example is taken from Chaya Ostrower's psychological research (2000) entitled *Humor as a Defense Mechanism in the Holocaust* (<http://web.macam98.ac.il/~ochayo/absractn.html>) which studied the Jewish

people who suffered from the holocaust. The Jewish people who suffered from the holocaust were mostly developed a sense of humor in order to survive the cruelty of German's holocaust, despite the tragic and painful experiences they had to bear.

This study shows how human is able to develop any kind of defense mechanism in order to protect them self from the suffering and agony, whether psychological or physical suffering. One of the survivors of the holocaust noted: "...Look, without humor we would all have committed suicide. We made fun of everything. What I'm actually saying is that that helped us remain human, even under hard conditions" (<http://web.macam98.ac.il/~ochayo/absractn.html>). This idea shows us that human will unconsciously find a way to make him/her self survive a terrible condition and protect their humanity from being crippling down.

Human will always unconsciously find way to protect themselves from unpleasant condition or situation. The kind of way which is done by the survivor of the Holocaust is just one of the varieties of defense mechanism of the ego. Every human being applies defense mechanism of the ego differently, according to their surrounding and their mental condition.

Primary defense mechanisms include repression and denial, which serve to prevent unacceptable ideas or impulses from entering the conscience (Wellek & Warren, 1956, p.85). Secondary defense mechanisms—generally appearing as an outgrowth of the primary defense mechanisms—includes projection, reaction formation, displacement, sublimation, and isolation (<http://www.bartleby.com/65/ps/psychoan.html>). Meanwhile, according to Bressler (1998), the kinds of defense mechanism of the ego are:

1. Repression is the effort of the ego to keep the contents of the id permanently unconscious. In repression, painful thoughts are excluded from human's conscious mind.
2. Projection. The avoidance of the pressure to the ego by the id or superego is attributed to the external world. In other words, one attributes one's own motives or feelings to someone else. A man who has cheated on his wife may feel guilty at first, and then angry, accusing his wife of having cheated on him.

3. Reaction Formation. Sometimes a person is motivated in ways that he or she knows are unacceptable to cultural or religious values. If the unacceptable goal is attractive, he or she may develop a reaction formation by excessively attacking or eliminating it. For example, a worker who is jealous of a colleague's success may exaggeratedly praise his colleague's work.

4. Fixation. The avoidance of the pressure to the ego by not taking "the next step" in life, e.g. children afraid of the first day of school. The chief danger is insecurity. Insecurity is a state of mind that develops when a person feels that he does not possess the ability to deal with the demands of a new situation.

5. Displacement. In displacement one redirects emotions and motives from their original target to substituted subjects. For example, a shy young man who loves an attractive, popular woman may redirect his attentions to her less intimidating, more approachable best friend.

6. Intellectualization. Sometimes emotional conflicts can be made bearable by analyzing them in an intellectual, unemotional way, a process called intellectualization. This kind of defense mechanism is considered to be the highest level of defense mechanism, along with sublimation.

7. Sublimation. According to Freud (as quoted from Weber, 1991, p.187), all defense mechanisms involved the dangers of maladjustment and increased anxiety, except sublimation. Sublimation is a process of transforming unconscious conflict into a more socially acceptable form.

After reviewing the kinds of defense mechanism of the ego, I decided not to employ all these kinds of defense mechanisms of the ego to the main character of the novel. Yet, I will choose the most suited kind from the six kinds of defense mechanisms of the ego. For example, I will not include Fixation in my analysis because Frank McCourt, although he lives under poverty, he never experiences peer pressure due to his poverty. It is because Frank lives in a society where the majority of people also live under poverty.

However, although I reviewed almost all kinds of defense mechanism, I will only apply repression, intellectualization, and displacement on the analysis. First, it is because I need to give a clear depiction on the kinds of defense mechanism of the ego before I can really focus on the three kinds of defense

mechanism which suit most with the experience of Frank McCourt. Secondly, the kinds of defense mechanism which I explain before is actually signify the progress or development of an individual, starting from repression which is commonly happened in the childhood until sublimation which is mostly experienced in the adulthood. Therefore I must explain defense mechanism of the ego as a whole theory before I make it more specific. Thirdly, I choose only three kinds out of seven kinds of defense mechanism because those three kinds of defense mechanism can be clearly seen in the novel through the acts and thoughts of the main character.

As a conclusion to this part, I consider that although Frank McCourt develops defense mechanisms of the ego in order to survive the ordeal of his childhood, he is not submitted to all kinds of defense mechanisms. What I mean by the ordeal of McCourt's childhood is the poor condition of his society which leads him to experience an unpleasant childhood. Therefore I will choose the kinds of defense mechanisms of the ego that appear in the novel.