

FOCUS ON VOCABULARY AND LANGUAGE

The Psychoanalytic Perspective

“*Freud would be the winner hands down.*” Freud is familiar to many people and his name would be the one most likely given if people were asked to name a famous historical psychologist (“*Freud would be the winner hands down*”). His influence can still be seen (*it lingers*) in books, movies, and in the treatment of psychological disorders.

Exploring the Unconscious

He [Freud] also glimpsed the unconscious in *slips of the tongue and pen*, . . . Freud used the technique of **free association** to gain access to the **unconscious**. He also thought he got a brief look at (*glimpse of*) the unconscious in the content of people’s dreams as well as in the inadvertent verbal mistakes they make in speech and writing (their *slips of the tongue and pen*).

“*If you can’t beat ‘em [the same sex parent], join ‘em.*” This common expression suggests that if you can’t win against your opponents (*if you can’t beat ‘em*), you would be better off to form an alliance with them (to *join ‘em*). According to Freud, the process of becoming like the parent of the same sex (**identification**) follows a similar process and gives rise to our sense of being male or female (our *gender identity*).

In such ways, Freud suggested, the *twig of personality* is *bent* at an early age. Freud believed that adult **personality** was formed during the first 4 or 5 years of life and was a function of the way the conflicts of the first three **psychosexual stages** (oral, anal, and phallic) were handled. Just as the shape of a grown tree is the result of how a young tree (*twig*) has been twisted (*bent*), adult personality is a function of early childhood experiences.

Evaluating the Psychoanalytic Perspective

They [traumatic events] are seared onto the soul. Traumatic events are likely to be remembered very well; they can occur as unwanted, persistent, and intrusive memories (*flashbacks*) that appear often to the survivors (*they haunt them*). In a sense, they are indelibly impressed in memory (*they are seared onto the soul*).

More than we realize, we fly on autopilot, guided by off-screen, out-of-sight, unconscious information processing. Just as a plane can be flown by its onboard computer systems (it can *fly on autopilot*), controlled by the processing of hidden hardware and software (*guided by off-screen, out-of-sight processing*), our behavior and conscious thoughts are similarly the result of the *unconscious information processing* that happens without our awareness (it is *out-of-sight*). Freud’s idea that we have limited access to all that goes on in our minds has been supported by today’s researchers, who conceptualize the mind as a dual-processing (*two-track*) system with one part conscious and the other unconscious (*our two-track mind has a vast out-of-sight realm; The unconscious mind is huge*).

Moreover, say the critics, Freud’s theory offers *after-the-fact explanations* of behaviors and traits, but it fails to predict them. For a theory to be considered scientifically acceptable, it must be able to explain observations and provide testable hypotheses. Freud’s theory fails on this account. In addition, his theory offers explanations only after the events or behaviors have occurred (*after-the-fact explanations*). According to the critics, Freud’s theory does not meet acceptable or desired scientific standards.

The Humanistic Perspective

Abraham Maslow's Self-Actualizing Person

(Photo caption) . . . *crippled spirits* . . . Abraham Maslow, a humanistic psychologist, studied healthy, motivated, creative people and came to the conclusion that, once our basic needs are met, we all seek **self-actualization**. He believed that any theory of personality and motivation must be based on more than the study of psychologically impaired individuals (*crippled spirits*); rather, it should also include those who have achieved or fulfilled their innate potential (*self-actualized people*).

Carl Rogers' Person-Centered Perspective

Like acorns, we are primed to reach our potential if we are given a growth-promoting environment. Carl Rogers was another pioneer in humanistic psychology. He believed that we are born with an innate striving (*we are primed*) that pushes us to reach our potential. Like the seed (*acorn*) of the oak tree, we will grow and develop into our best selves unless we are blocked or thwarted by an uncaring and unaccepting environment. As Rogers puts it, *genuineness, acceptance, and empathy are the water, sun, and nutrients that enable people to grow like vigorous oak trees.*

The Trait Perspective

Searching for Basic Personality Traits

Your job is to construct a *questionnaire* that will help people describe themselves to those *seeking dates and mates*. A person interested in forming a long-term committed relationship with another is said to be searching for a *mate*, and part of the cultural ritual in this endeavor often involves arranging a social outing or a *date* with the other person (*seeking dates and mates*). To find out more about the prospective partner, responses to a survey (*questionnaire*) based on the *Eysenck Personality Questionnaire* or the *Big Five* would provide important information about character and personality.

Thinking Critically About: How to Be a "Successful" Astrologer

. . . *scoff* . . . This means to have a contemptuously mocking attitude toward something. Astronomers who study the universe scientifically *scoff* at astrologers who believe that the planets and stars determine human affairs.

. . . "*stock spiel*" . . . A "*stock spiel*" is a well-rehearsed and glib story. Astrologers, horoscope writers, and other such people ("*seers*") often use statements that are generally true of almost everybody (their "*stock spiel*"). Most people find it hard to resist believing the flattering descriptions of themselves; consequently, many view astrology as an authentic art. Myers warns, however, that those who use these methods exploit people and fraudulently take their money (*they are fortune takers*) but they do not provide accurate predictions (*they are not fortune tellers*).

The Social-Cognitive Perspective

The Person

If we remember such results, we will be more careful about *labeling* other people (Mischel, 1968, 1984, 2004). Research has shown that some behavior can be context specific (i.e., determined by the situation and not by the personality) and that personality test scores are poorly correlated with

people's actual behavior on any particular occasion. Mischel warns that we should be careful about classifying individuals (*labeling* them) because people are not always predictable.

During my noontime pickup basketball games with friends, I keep vowing to cut back on my jabbering and joking. But without fail, the irrepressible chatterbox reoccupies my body moments later. When playing basketball with friends David Myers does a lot of talking, often about funny or unimportant things (*jabbering and joking*). Despite efforts to reduce these constant verbal utterances (*he vows to cut back on them*), he typically does not succeed, as his natural talkative tendencies or traits reassert themselves (*the irrepressible chatterbox reoccupies my body*). This illustrates the stable and persistent nature of some personality traits.

Personal Web sites are a canvas for self-expression (Gosling et al., 2007; Marcus et al., 2006). Just as an artist paints a realistic image of a person on paper or cloth (a *canvas*), we similarly reveal much about ourselves on our personal Web sites and in how we express ourselves in e-mails (*they are a canvas for self-expression*). Myers demonstrates this by using many exclamation points “!!!” in the text and then asks if you noticed what he had done (*if you catch my drift*).

The Interaction

If you expect a family member to be angry, you may *give that person a cold shoulder, touching off* the very anger you expect. The way we are (our *personalities*) may influence how others treat us. If we believe that someone has hostile intentions toward us, we may ignore that person and treat him with indifference (*give that person a cold shoulder*). This in turn may cause (*touch off*) the angry behavior we predicted or expected from that person. As Myers notes, in such ways we are both the results (*products*) and the creators (*architects*) of our environments.

Exploring the Self

We stand out less than we imagine, even with dorky clothes or bad hair, and even after a blunder like setting off a library alarm. A person who stands out is someone who is very noticeable to other people. If we make a clumsy mistake (*a blunder*), we think that everyone is paying attention to us (*we think we stand out*), but this is often not the case. For example, students who had to wear a very unfashionable T-shirt with the picture of a lounge singer on it (*a Barry Manilow T-shirt*) thought that many people would notice their odd attire (*dorky clothes*), but very few did. This is a good illustration of the **spotlight effect**.

Self-Esteem: The Good News and the Bad

When studying insult-triggered aggression, researchers found that “*conceited, self-important individuals turn nasty toward those who puncture their bubbles of self-love*” (Baumeister, 2001; Bushman et al., 2009). Defensive **self-esteem** is tenuous and frail (*fragile*) and when unrealistically excessive (*inflated self-esteem*), it can lead to problems. For example, in one study, when self-centered and arrogant (*conceited and self-important*) participants were insulted, they were more likely to become spiteful and malicious (*turn nasty*) toward those who questioned their exaggerated narcissism and vanity (*toward those who punctured their bubbles of self-love*). *Secure self-esteem* is less frail (*fragile*) and leads to greater quality of life.

Self-Serving Bias

Athletes often privately credit their victories to their own *talent*. Their losses are the result of *bad breaks*, *lousy officials*, or the other team's amazing performance. Athletes, like the rest of us, want to feel that desirable outcomes are due to their own abilities (*talent*) and that failures are due to factors beyond their control such as poor luck (*bad breaks*), unfair referees (*lousy officials*), or their opponents' unexpectedly outstanding efforts. This is called the **self-serving bias**.

"Aryan pride" fueled Nazi horrors. Our conceit and self-important attitudes (*pride*) often precede a harsh lesson from reality. As Myers notes, it was nationalistic pride (the conceited belief that the Aryan race was superior, or *"Aryan pride"*) that facilitated and fostered (*fueled*) the growth of the Nazi movement and legitimized their inhumane and cruel deeds (*Nazi horrors*).

Second, self put-downs are sometimes meant to prompt positive feedback. When people are self-disparaging and use criticisms aimed at themselves (*self put-downs*), they may have a hidden purpose. Their real intention may be to try to elicit reassurances about their good qualities from others (*they are meant to prompt positive feedback*). They may also be an attempt to alleviate anxiety about past bad behavior, especially if it reflects poorly on their present view of themselves (*they were chumps yesterday, but champs today*).