

FOCUS ON VOCABULARY AND LANGUAGE

Psychodynamic Theories

Freud's Psychoanalytic Perspective: Exploring the Unconscious

“*Freud would be the winner hands down.*” Sigmund 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.

. . . *Victorian era* . . . The period of time when Queen Victoria reigned or ruled over the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (1837 to 1901) is known as the *Victorian era*. It was characterized by great scientific advances but also by the assumption that men were naturally superior and should be in control (*male dominance*). Also, the topic of sexuality was generally avoided (*sexual repression*). Freud was influenced by the attitudes and values of this historical period (*the Victorian era*) and his views and interests were shaped by them (*he was a product of his times*).

He [Freud] also *glimpsed* the unconscious *in slips of the tongue and pen*, as when a *financially stressed patient*, not wanting any large *pills*, said, “Please do not give me any *bills*, because I cannot swallow them.” Freud used the technique of **free association** to gain access to the **unconscious**. He also thought he got a brief look at (*a glimpse of*) the unconscious in jokes, the content of people’s dreams, and the verbal mistakes one might make while talking or writing (*slips of the tongue and pen*). For example, when a patient who was having money problems (*who was financially stressed*) mistakenly asked Freud not to give him any *bills* (rather than *pills*), Freud thought it was his unconscious anxieties leaking (*seeping*) into his verbal behavior. Freud also believed that dreams provided a route to the unconscious (*a “royal road to the unconscious”*) and that dream analysis could reveal a patient’s inner conflicts.

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

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 reflection of early childhood experiences.

Evaluating Freud's Psychoanalytic Perspective and Modern Views of the Unconscious

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.

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*. Similar to a plane that can be flown by its onboard computer systems (*can fly on autopilot*) and controlled by the processing of hidden hardware and software, our behavior and conscious thoughts are the result of *unconscious information processing* that happens without our awareness (*out-of-sight*). Freud believed that we have limited access to all that goes on in our minds, and this idea 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*).

People who *binge drink* or *break speed limits* tend to think many others do the same. People who drink excessive amounts of alcohol every once in a while (*binge drinkers*) or people who drive their cars at speeds that are faster than those allowed by law (*break speed limits*) believe that many other people behave in a similar manner. This is an example of what Freud called *projection* (a defense mechanism in which we "see" our own threatening impulses in others) and of what today's researchers call the *false consensus effect* (the tendency to overestimate the extent to which others share our beliefs and behaviors).

Humanistic Theories

Abraham Maslow's Self-Actualizing Person

(Photo caption) . . . crippled spirits . . . Abraham Maslow, a humanistic psychologist, studied healthy, motivated, creative people. He came to the conclusion that, once our basic needs are met, we all seek **self-actualization** and **self-transcendence**. 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 plants, 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 have self-actualizing tendencies and are born ready and prepared (*primed*) with the capacity to realize our latent talents and abilities (*to reach our potential*). Like plants, we will grow and develop into our best selves if we are shown **unconditional positive regard** in caring and accepting conditions (*a growth-promoting environment*). People nurture our growth, and we nurture theirs. As Rogers noted, *genuineness, acceptance, and empathy are the water, sun, and nutrients that enable people to grow like vigorous oak trees*.

Evaluating Humanistic Theories

Just as Freudian concepts *seeped into modern culture*, humanistic psychology has had a *far-reaching impact*. Freud's ideas have spread throughout (*seeped into*) the beliefs, customs, and social behavior of our time (*modern culture*). Humanistic psychology has also had a great influence (*a far-reaching impact*) on such areas as counseling, education, management, and child raising and has provided a basis (*laid the groundwork*) for today's scientific positive psychology.

Trait Theories

Exploring 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*. 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 Eysencks two basic **traits** or *The Big Five* personality factors would provide important information about character and personality.

Thinking Critically About: The Stigma of Introversion

Extraverted Superman is bold and energetic. Superman is a comic book, TV, and movie character with extraordinary powers. He is often depicted as outgoing (*extraverted*), courageous (*bold*), and full of vitality (*energetic*). Superman possesses highly desirable qualities and personality traits (*the "right stuff"*) and, to avoid detection, he disguises himself as Clark Kent, a quiet, polite (*mild-mannered*) writer (*his introverted alter ego*). In our culture, with TV shows that typically portray exceedingly attractive celebrities (*heartthrobs*) and highly successful people as *extraverts*, *introverts* are viewed much less favorably (*they are belittled*).

Evaluating Trait Theories

If we remember such results, we will be more careful about *labeling* other people (Mischel, 1968, 2004). Research has shown that some behavior can be context specific (that is, 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. Consequently, researchers warn that we should be careful about classifying (*labeling*) individuals and concluding that they belong in one particular slot because people are not always predictable.

During my [DM] 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 (*his vow to cut back on them*), he typically does not succeed because his natural tendency to be talkative reasserts itself (*the irrepressible chatterbox reoccupies my body*). This illustrates the stable and persistent nature of some personality traits.

Online profiles and personal websites are a canvas for self-expression. Just as an artist paints a realistic image of a person on paper or cloth (*a canvas*), we similarly reveal much about ourselves in electronic communications and on social networking sites (*they are a canvas for self-expression*). Personality traits such as *extraversion*, *neuroticism*, and *agreeableness* are also evident in the words and phrases people use in texts and e-mails (*their writing voice*). Myers demonstrates this with the use of exclamatory punctuation ("!!!") in the text—*You are right!! What a cool, exciting finding!!!*—then asks if you noticed (*if you catch my drift*).

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 (Gilovich & Savitsky, 1999; Savitsky et al., 2001). 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 very unfashionable T-shirts with the picture of a lounge singer on them (*Barry Manilow T-shirts*) thought that many people would notice their odd attire (*dorky clothes*), but very few did. This is a good illustration of the **spotlight effect**.

The Benefits of Self-Esteem

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 it is unrealistically excessive (*inflated self-esteem*), it can lead to problems. For example, in one study, when self-centered and arrogant participants (*conceited, self-important individuals*) were insulted, they were more likely to become spiteful and mean (*turn nasty*) toward those who questioned their exaggerated *narcissism* and vanity (*toward those who punctured their bubbles of self-love*). *Secure self-esteem* is much stronger (*it is sturdier*) and leads to greater quality of life.

Self-Serving Bias

When athletes succeed, they credit their own *talent*. When they fail, they blame *poor weather, bad luck, 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 causes beyond their control such as unfortunate circumstances (*bad luck*), bad (*poor*) weather, unfair referees (*lousy officials*), or their opponents’ unexpectedly outstanding efforts (*the other team’s amazing performance*). This is called the **self-serving bias**.

Ethnic pride fueled Nazi horrors and Rwandan genocide. Our conceit and self-important attitudes (*pride*) often precede a harsh lesson from reality. As Myers notes, it was the conceited and arrogant belief that their racial group was superior (*ethnic pride*) that facilitated and fostered (*fueled*) the growth of the Nazi movement and legitimized its inhumane and cruel deeds (*the Nazi horrors*). Further, similar arrogant beliefs led one particular *ethnic group* to slaughter thousands of people of a different *ethnic group* in Rwanda (*the Rwandan genocide*).

Self put-downs are sometimes meant to prompt positive feedback. When people disparage themselves with criticisms aimed at themselves (*self put-downs*), they sometimes have a dishonest or 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 reduce or eliminate anxiety about past bad behavior, especially if it reflects poorly on their present view of themselves (*chumps yesterday, but champs today*).