

FOCUS ON VOCABULARY AND LANGUAGE

Psychodynamic Theories

Freud's Psychoanalytic Perspective: Exploring the Unconscious

"Freud would be the winner hands down." Freud is familiar to many people and his name is the one most likely to be given if a person 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.

He [Freud] so loved reading plays, poetry, and philosophy that *he once ran up a bookstore debt* beyond his means. When he was young, Freud was a very serious student with an exceptionally intelligent mind and an intense interest in a variety of topics. To satisfy his curiosity about literature and the natural sciences, he obtained many books that he could not afford to pay for (*he ran up a bookstore debt beyond his means*).

Freud's search for a cause for such disorders *set his mind running* . . . Patients came to Freud with strange neurological (*nervous*) disorders that had no obvious physiological explanation. Freud suspected that the problems were psychological in nature, and the questions raised by this theorizing caused him to think (*set his mind running*) in a way that changed how we view human nature.

He [Freud] believed he could *glimpse* the unconscious seeping not only into people's free associations, beliefs, habits, and symptoms but also into *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 fleeting look at (a *glimpse* of) the unconscious in the content of people's dreams and in the inadvertent verbal mistakes we make in speech and writing (*slips of the tongue and pen*).

(*Margin note*) . . . *linguistic flip-flops (spoonerisms)*. Professor Spooner became well known because of his habit of inadvertently twisting and distorting his sentences (*linguistic flip-flops* or *spoonerisms*). For example, instead of saying, "lighting a fire in the quadrangle" he said, "fighting a liar in the quadrangle." "You missed my history lecture" came out as, "you hissed my mystery lecture" and "you have wasted two hours" became, "you have tasted two worms." Psychoanalysts call these "slips of the tongue" (*Freudian slips*) and believe they represent unconscious motives and desires seeping through.

Someone with an exceptionally strong superego *may be virtuous* yet *guilt-ridden*; another with a weak superego may be *wantonly* self-indulgent and remorseless. In Freud's theory, the **superego** (our conscience) develops when, around age 4 or 5, a child incorporates society's values through identification with the rival parent. A person with a well-developed superego may behave in an appropriately moral way (*may be virtuous*) yet still feel ashamed and anxious (*guilt-ridden*). In contrast, someone with a poorly developed superego may be excessively and willfully (*wantonly*) selfish and aggressive. The superego guides us in determining right from wrong (it is our *moral compass*).

"If you can't beat 'em [the parent of the same sex], 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 process and gives rise to what we now call our *gender identity* (our sense of being male or female).

. . . *uttering biting sarcasm* . . . If there are unresolved conflicts at any of the **psychosexual stages**, the person may become stuck (*fixated*) at that stage. This **fixation** will directly affect the development of a psychologically healthy **personality**. People fixated at the *oral stage* may become very dependent, or they may pretend to be the opposite by acting strong and independent and by using cruel and destructive humor (*uttering biting sarcasm*) to attack the self-respect of others. In addition, this personality type may have an excessive need for oral gratification (for example, smoking, nail biting, eating, or chewing on pens).

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 four or five years of life and was a reflection of the way the conflicts of the first three psychosexual stages (*oral, anal, and phallic*) were handled. Just as the shape of the grown tree is the result of how the young tree (*twig*) was twisted (*bent*), adult personality is a reflection of early childhood experiences.

Assessing Unconscious Processes

Others view it [the Rorschach inkblot test] as a helpful diagnostic tool, *a source of suggestive leads*, or an *icebreaker* and a revealing interview technique. Because of problems in scoring and interpreting the **Rorschach inkblot test**, most researchers question its validity and reliability. Some clinicians use the test to help generate hypotheses about a person's problems (*as a source of suggestive leads*); others use it as a point of departure to help get the interview under way and to get the person talking (they use it as an *icebreaker*).

Evaluating Psychodynamic Theories

. . . *cognitive gymnastics* . . . Freud's idea that **defense mechanisms** disguise sexual and aggressive impulses has not received much empirical support. However there is evidence that we use mental manipulations and distortions (*cognitive gymnastics*) to protect our **self-esteem**.

Psychologists also criticize Freud's theory for its *scientific shortcomings*. 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*). Freud's theory does not meet acceptable or desired scientific standards (it has *scientific shortcomings*).

They 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 (*they haunt survivors*). In a sense, they are indelibly impressed in memory (*seared onto the soul*).

More than we realize, we *fly on autopilot*. Our lives are *guided by off-screen, out-of-sight, unconscious information processing*. 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 (*guided by off-screen, out-of-sight processing*), 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 system with one part conscious and the other unconscious (*our two-track mind has a vast out-of-sight realm*).

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**. 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

Unless *thwarted* by an environment that inhibits growth, each of us is like an *acorn*, *primed* for growth and fulfillment. Carl Rogers, another pioneer in humanistic psychology, believed that we are born with an innate striving (we are *primed*) for achieving our potential. Like the seed (*acorn*) of an oak tree, we will grow and develop unless we are blocked (*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.*

Evaluating Humanistic Theories

The *prominence* of the humanistic perspective *set off a backlash of criticism*. Humanistic psychology has been popular because it is consistent with individualism, which encourages one to trust and act on one's feelings, to follow one's beliefs and ambitions (*to be true to oneself*), and to develop one's full potential (*fulfill oneself*). The high status (*prominence*) of the humanistic viewpoint has elicited a strongly adverse and disapproving reaction (*it set off a backlash of criticism*) from its critics. They have said that this perspective could lead to self-centeredness, egocentrism, and the weakening of moral inhibitions (*an erosion of moral restraints*) and could also promote an overly inflated sense of hopefulness (*starry-eyed optimism*) while ignoring the reality of the human capacity for evil (*it is naive*). As Myers notes, "action requires enough realism to *fuel* (motivate) concern and enough optimism to provide hope."

Trait Theories

Exploring Traits

. . . *blind date* . . . When a social outing (*date*) is arranged with a person you have never met or seen before, the meeting or appointment is called a *blind date*. The person you are going out with is also called your *blind date*. Having the person (*blind date*) ranked or assessed by a **personality inventory** (for example, by the "*Big Five*" *Personality Factors*) would reveal quite a bit about the person's character and personality.

Assessing Traits

Nevertheless, people have had fun *spoofing* the MMPI with their own *mock* items . . . Some items on the **Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)** may appear nonsensical (*sound silly*), but because they differentiate, say, depressed people from nondepressed people, they have been retained in the inventory. Some people have created humorous but false (*mock*) items for a personality test that is a parody (*spoof*) of the MMPI.

Thinking Critically About: How to Be a “Successful” Astrologer or Palm Reader

. . . *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.

. . . *suckering methods* . . . To get *suckered* means to be easily fooled and exploited. Psychologists, such as Ray Hyman, show us how astrologers, hand (*palm*) readers, *graphologists* (who allegedly analyze handwriting to reveal personality), and others fool and exploit people by use of a few simple techniques (*suckering methods*).

. . . *“stock spiel”* . . . A *“stock spiel”* is a well-rehearsed and glib story. Astrologers, horoscope writers, and such (*seers*) often use statements that are generally true of almost everybody (their *“stock spiel”*), and most people find it hard to resist believing the flattering descriptions of themselves. As a result, 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 do not provide accurate predictions (they are not *fortune tellers*).

The Big Five Factors

A slightly expanded set of factors—*dubbed* the *Big Five*—does a better job (Costa & McCrae, 2009). The Eysencks used two prime personality dimensions or factors—*introverted–extraverted* and emotionally *unstable–stable*—to describe personality. Other research offers a slightly expanded set of factors (*conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness, and extraversion*), which is named (*dubbed*) the *Big Five*. The *Big Five* may not be the definitive description of (*the last word on*) personality **traits**, but at the moment it provides the closest estimate (*approximation*) of the basic trait dimensions.

Evaluating Trait Theories

If we remember such results, says Mischel, we will be more cautious about *labeling* and *pigeonholing* individuals. 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. For this reason, Mischel warns that we should be careful about classifying individuals (*labeling*) and concluding that they belong in one particular slot (*pigeonholing*).

I have repeatedly *vowed to cut back on my jabbering and joking* during my noontime pickup basketball games with friends. Alas, moments later, the *irrepressible chatterbox inevitably reoccupies my body*. When playing basketball with friends, 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 because his natural tendency to be talkative reasserts itself (*the irrepressible chatterbox inevitably reoccupies my body*). This illustrates the stable and persistent nature of some personality traits.

Is a personal website or a Facebook profile also *a canvas for self-expression*? Just as an artist paints a realistic image of a person on paper or cloth (*a canvas*), we too reveal much about ourselves online—in our personal websites, e-mails, or Facebook profiles (*they are a canvas for self-expression*). Myers demonstrates this with the use of exclamatory punctuation (“!!!”) in the text—*. . . you are right!! (What a cool, exciting finding!!!) Did you notice?*

Social-Cognitive Theories

Reciprocal Influences

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

Personal Control

Later placed in another situation where they could escape the punishment by simply *leaping a hurdle*, the dogs cowered as if without hope. In Seligman’s experiments, dogs learned that nothing they did had any effect on what happened to them (*learned helplessness*). Consequently, they would not make even a minimal effort, such as jumping over a small barrier (*leaping a hurdle*), to escape being shocked. Similarly, people who feel they have no control over what happens to them (*no personal control*) may become depressed and feel hopeless and helpless (may feel *passive resignation* or *learned helplessness*).

. . . so many low-scoring students are *dumbfounded* after doing badly on an exam. People are often most overconfident when most incompetent, mainly because it is difficult for them to recognize their own incompetence without having competence in the first place. Consequently, many students who do not recognize that they are having problems are often astounded (*dumbfounded*) when they find they are not in the top half of their class. (As Myers notes, “blind (*illusory*) optimism can be self-defeating.”)

Assessing Behavior in Situations

(*Margin note*) Most didn’t, out of the blue, “just snap.” The best means of predicting future behavior is to look at a person’s past behavior patterns in similar situations. Most who engaged in uncontrolled violent and deadly behavior (*rampage murders*) had, in the past, frequently demonstrated outbursts of rage (*exploded in anger*) or indicated a deliberate intention to cause harm or injury (*threatened violence*). Most did not suddenly and without indication (*out of the blue*) create havoc and mayhem (*snap*). As Myers notes, *the best predictor of future aggressiveness is past aggressiveness*.

Exploring the Self

Even after a *blunder* . . . we *stick out like a sore thumb* less than we imagine (Savitsky et al., 2001). A person who “*sticks out like a sore thumb*” is someone who is very noticeable to everyone as odd or different. If we make a clumsy mistake (*a blunder*), we think that everyone is paying attention to us (*that we stick out like a sore thumb*), but this is often not the case. For example, students who had to wear very unfashionable T-shirts with the picture of a singer (had to *don 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

But is high self-esteem the horse or the cart? The expression “*putting the cart before the horse*” means to reverse the usual order of things or ideas. Myers is asking, do high feelings of self-worth (*high self-esteem*) create benefits (*pay dividends*) by motivating people to do well and be successful? Or, instead, does being successful and overcoming challenges give rise to feelings of *high self-esteem*? Is *high self-esteem* the cause (*the horse pulling the cart*) or the result (*the side effect*) of surmounting difficulties and overcoming challenges (*is it the cart coming before the horse*)?

Those who *are negative about themselves* also tend to be *oversensitive* and *judgmental* (Baumgardner et al., 1989; Pelham, 1993). People who have low self-esteem (*are negative about themselves*) are more likely to be anxious, depressed, insecure, and very aware of and responsive to criticism (*oversensitive*). In addition, they are more likely to disparage and be critical (*judgmental*) of others. People who have low self-esteem (*are down on themselves*) tend to be less accepting and critical of other things and people (*they tend to be down on them*).

Self-Serving Bias

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

The world, it seems, is Garrison Keillor’s *Lake Wobegon* writ large—a place where “all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average.” *Lake Wobegon* is a fictional but ideal community satirized by comedian Garrison Keillor. Most abilities follow a bell-shaped distribution (a normal curve), so approximately half the population will be below average and half above average on any given trait (for example, strength, looks, or intelligence). The *self-serving bias*, which prompts most of us to rate ourselves as above average, appears to be almost universal. Thus, the world is a magnified reflection of the *Lake Wobegon* community.

Self-serving bias *flies in the face of pop psychology*. One claim of *pop psychology* is that we all have inferiority complexes. As is often the case, scientific psychology has clearly demonstrated that the opposite is actually true and that empirically based research findings contradict or refute the popular beliefs (*they fly in the face of pop psychology claims*).

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

Similarly, an adolescent or adult with a *swelled head* that gets deflated by insult is *potentially dangerous*. Overly self-confident people with high self-esteem (*swelled heads* or *large egos*) do more than retaliate in kind when criticized, insulted, or rejected. Instead, they are more likely to react violently and aggressively (*they are potentially dangerous*). Researchers suggest that this negative aspect (*dark side*) of self-esteem is the result of threatened egotism rather than low self-esteem. Baumeister concluded that arrogant, vain, self-satisfied people become spiteful and malicious (*turn nasty*) toward those who question their inflated self-image (*those who puncture their bubbles of self-love*).

(Margin quote) The enthusiastic claims of the self-esteem movement mostly range *from fantasy to hogwash*. The popular belief that having high self-esteem is essential to being a happy, well-adjusted, caring person is not supported by research. Baumeister (1996) suggests that the claims of the self-esteem movement vary from being imaginative, wishful thinking (*fantasy*) to sheer nonsense (*hogwash*)—that the effects of self-esteem are not very large or important.

Sometimes *self-directed put-downs* are *subtly strategic*: They elicit *reassuring strokes*. When people disparage themselves with criticisms aimed at themselves (*self-directed put-downs*), they sometimes have an insidious or hidden purpose (they are *subtly strategic*). They may want to have people reassure them that the opposite is true (they want *reassuring strokes*). Or, they may want to prepare for the worst possible outcome so that they have a rationalization for failure ready, just in case. In addition, self-ridicule or self-mocking is often concerned with past bad behavior, not with how the present **self** is perceived (*in their own eyes, chumps yesterday, champs today*).