

Unit X

Personality

Modules

55 Freud's Psychoanalytic Perspective: Exploring the Unconscious

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Lord of the Rings hobbit-hero Frodo Baggins knew that throughout his difficult journey there was one who would never fail him—his loyal and ever-cheerful companion, Sam Gamgee. Even before they left their beloved homes in the Shire, Frodo warned Sam that the journey would not be easy.

“It is going to be very dangerous, Sam. It is already dangerous.

Most likely neither of us will come back.”

“If you don’t come back, sir, then I shan’t, that’s certain,” said Sam. “[The Elves told me] ‘Don’t you leave him!’ Leave him! I said. I never mean to. I am going with him, if he climbs to the Moon; and if any of those Black Riders try to stop him, they’ll have Sam Gamgee to reckon with.” (J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1954, p. 96)

And so they did! Later in the story, when it becomes clear that Frodo’s path will lead him into the dreaded land of Mordor, it is Sam who insists he will be at Frodo’s side, come what may. It is Sam who lifts Frodo’s spirits with songs and stories from their boyhood. And it is Sam whom Frodo leans upon when he can barely take another step. When Frodo is overcome by the evil of the ring he carries, it is Sam who saves him. In the end, it is Sam who helps Frodo successfully

reach the end of his journey. Sam Gamgee—cheerful, optimistic, emotionally stable—never falters in his faithfulness or his belief that they will overcome the threatening darkness.

As he appears and reappears throughout the series, Tolkien's Sam Gamgee exhibits the distinctive and enduring behaviors that define **personality**—a person's characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting. Earlier units have focused on our similar ways of developing, perceiving, learning, remembering, thinking, and feeling. This unit focuses on what makes us each unique.

Much of this book deals with personality. We have considered biological influences on personality, personality development across the life span, and personality-related aspects of learning, motivation, emotion, and health. In later units we will study social influences on personality and disorders of personality.

Two historically significant theories have become part of our cultural legacy. Sigmund Freud's *psychoanalytic* theory proposed that childhood sexuality and unconscious motivations influence personality. The *humanistic* approach focused on our inner capacities for growth and self-fulfillment. These sweeping perspectives on human nature laid the foundation for later personality theorists and are complemented by what this unit goes on to explore: newer scientific research of specific aspects of personality. Today's personality researchers study the basic dimensions of personality, the biological roots of these dimensions, and the interaction of persons and environments. They also study self-esteem, self-serving bias, and cultural influences on one's sense of self. And they study the unconscious mind—with findings that probably would have surprised Freud himself.

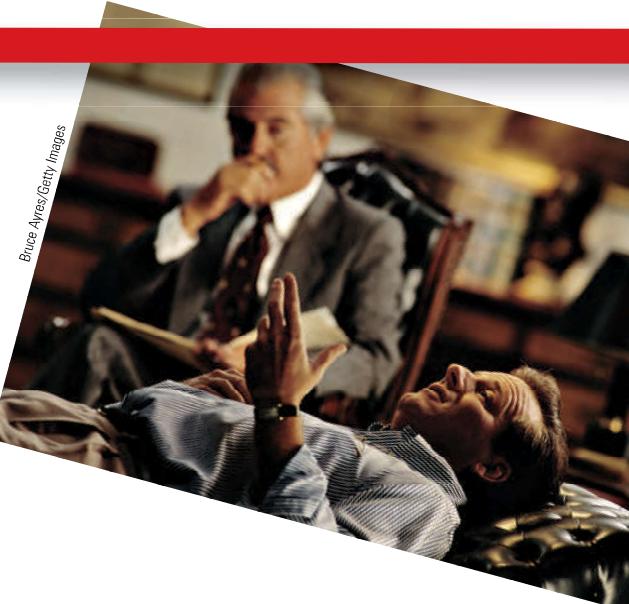
personality an individual's characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting.

Module 55

Freud's Psychoanalytic Perspective: Exploring the Unconscious

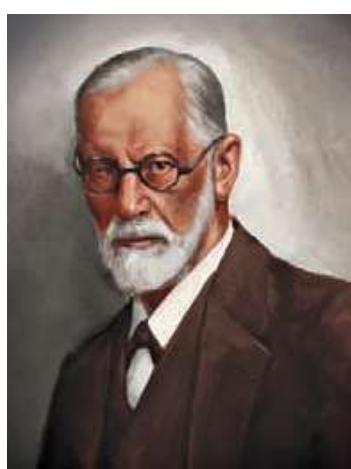
Module Learning Objectives

- 55-1** Explain how Freud's treatment of psychological disorders led to his view of the unconscious mind.
- 55-2** Describe Freud's view of personality.
- 55-3** Identify Freud's developmental stages.
- 55-4** Describe Freud's views on how people defend themselves against anxiety.
- 55-5** Discuss how contemporary psychologists view Freud's psychoanalytic perspective.



Freud's work is so well known that you may assume it's the most important theory in psychology. It's not. However, Freud was the first to focus clinical attention on the unconscious mind, and he is part of psychology's historical development.

Sigmund Freud, 1856–1939
"I was the only worker in a new field."



Psychoanalytic Theory's Core Ideas

- 55-1** How did Sigmund Freud's treatment of psychological disorders lead to his view of the unconscious mind?

Ask 100 people on the street to name a notable deceased psychologist, suggested Keith Stanovich (1996, p. 1), and "Freud would be the winner hands down." In the popular mind, he is to psychology's history what Elvis Presley is to rock music's history. Freud's influence not only lingers in psychiatry and clinical psychology, but also in literary and film interpretation. Almost 9 in 10 American college courses that reference psychoanalysis are outside of psychology departments (Cohen, 2007). His early twentieth-century concepts penetrate our twenty-first-century language. Without realizing their source, we may speak of *ego*, *repression*, *projection*, *sibling rivalry*, *Freudian slips*, and *fixation*. So, who was Freud, and what did he teach?

Like all of us, Sigmund Freud was a product of his times. His Victorian era was a time of tremendous discovery and scientific advancement, but it is also known today as a time of sexual repression and male dominance. Men's and women's roles were clearly defined, with male superiority assumed and only male sexuality generally acknowledged (discreetly).

Long before entering the University of Vienna in 1873, young Freud showed signs of independence and brilliance. He so loved reading plays, poetry, and philosophy that he once ran up a bookstore debt beyond his means. As a teen he often took his evening meal in his tiny bedroom in order to lose no time from his studies. After medical school he set up a private practice specializing in nervous disorders. Before long, however, he faced patients whose disorders made no neurological sense. For example, a patient might have lost all feeling in a hand—yet there is no sensory nerve that, if damaged, would numb the entire hand and nothing else. Freud's search for a cause for such disorders set his mind running in a direction destined to change human self-understanding.

Might some neurological disorders have psychological causes? Observing patients led Freud to his “discovery” of the unconscious. He speculated that lost feeling in one’s hand might be caused by a fear of touching one’s genitals; that unexplained blindness or deafness might be caused by not wanting to see or hear something that aroused intense anxiety. After some early unsuccessful trials with hypnosis, Freud turned to **free association**, in which he told the patient to relax and say whatever came to mind, no matter how embarrassing or trivial. He assumed that a line of mental dominoes had fallen from his patients’ distant past to their troubled present. Free association, he believed, would allow him to retrace that line, following a chain of thought leading into the patient’s unconscious, where painful unconscious memories, often from childhood, could be retrieved and released. Freud called his theory of personality and the associated treatment techniques **psychoanalysis**.

Basic to Freud’s theory was his belief that the mind is mostly hidden (**FIGURE 55.1**). Our conscious awareness is like the part of an iceberg that floats above the surface. Beneath our awareness is the larger **unconscious** mind with its thoughts, wishes, feelings, and memories. Some of these thoughts we store temporarily in a *preconscious* area, from which we can retrieve them into conscious awareness. Of greater interest to Freud was the mass of unacceptable passions and thoughts that he believed we *repress*, or forcibly block from our consciousness because they would be too unsettling to acknowledge. Freud believed that without our awareness, these troublesome feelings and ideas powerfully influence us, sometimes gaining expression in disguised forms—the work we choose, the beliefs we hold, our daily habits, our troubling symptoms.

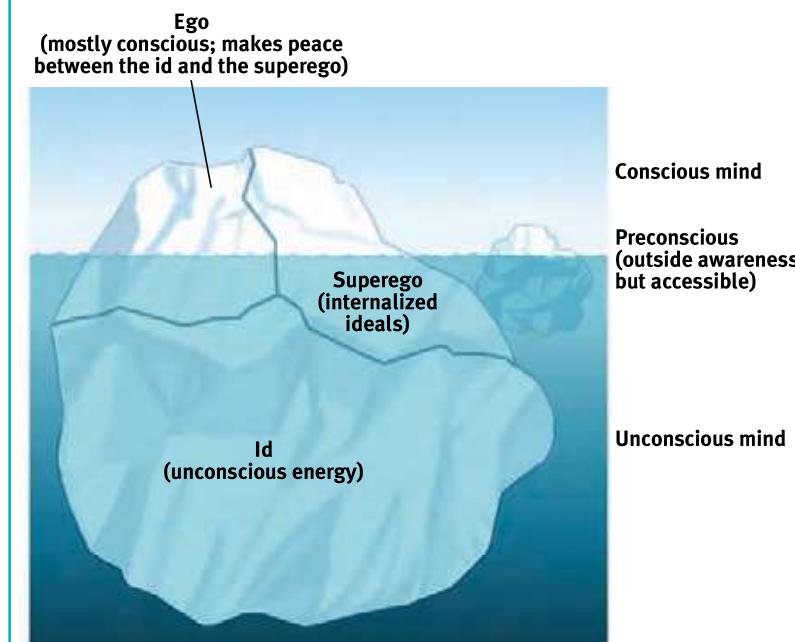
AP® Exam Tip

The boldfaced key terms that you read in this module are all quite famous terms. Even though modern psychology rejects many of the specifics of psychoanalysis, the fame of Freud’s concepts makes them likely topics for AP® exam questions.

free association in psychoanalysis, a method of exploring the unconscious in which the person relaxes and says whatever comes to mind, no matter how trivial or embarrassing.

psychoanalysis Freud’s theory of personality that attributes thoughts and actions to unconscious motives and conflicts; the techniques used in treating psychological disorders by seeking to expose and interpret unconscious tensions.

unconscious according to Freud, a reservoir of mostly unacceptable thoughts, wishes, feelings, and memories. According to contemporary psychologists, information processing of which we are unaware.

**Figure 55.1**

Freud's idea of the mind's structure Psychologists have used an iceberg image to illustrate Freud's idea that the mind is mostly hidden beneath the conscious surface. Note that the id is totally unconscious, but ego and superego operate both consciously and unconsciously. Unlike the parts of a frozen iceberg, however, the id, ego, and superego interact.

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"Good morning, beheaded—uh, I mean beloved."

"I remember your name perfectly but I just can't think of your face."
-OXFORD PROFESSOR W. A. SPOONER (1844–1930), FAMOUS FOR HIS LINGUISTIC FLIP-FLOPS (SPOONERISMS). SPOONER REBUKED ONE STUDENT FOR "FIGHTING A LIAR IN THE QUADRANGLE" AND ANOTHER WHO "HISSED MY MYSTERY LECTURE," ADDING "YOU HAVE TASTED TWO WORMS."

AP® Exam Tip

Be careful: It's easy to confuse Freud's three layers of the mind (conscious, preconscious, and unconscious) with the three parts of personality (id, ego, superego).



"Fifty is plenty." "Hundred and fifty."

The ego struggles to reconcile the demands of superego and id, said Freud.

For Freud the determinist, nothing was ever accidental. He 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. He illustrated with a financially stressed patient who, not wanting any large pills, said, "Please do not give me any bills, because I cannot swallow them." Similarly, Freud viewed jokes as expressions of repressed sexual and aggressive tendencies, and dreams as the "royal road to the unconscious." The remembered content of dreams (their *manifest content*) he believed to be a censored expression of the dreamer's unconscious wishes (the dream's *latent content*). In his dream analyses, Freud searched for patients' inner conflicts.

Personality Structure

55-2 What was Freud's view of personality?

In Freud's view, human personality—including its emotions and strivings—arises from a conflict between impulse and restraint—between our aggressive, pleasure-seeking biological urges and our internalized social controls over these urges. Freud believed personality arises from our efforts to resolve this basic conflict—to express these impulses in ways that bring satisfaction without also bringing guilt or punishment. To understand the mind's dynamics during this conflict, Freud proposed three interacting systems: the *id*, *ego*, and *superego* (Figure 55.1).

The **id**'s unconscious psychic energy constantly strives to satisfy basic drives to survive, reproduce, and aggress. The id operates on the *pleasure principle*: It seeks immediate gratification. To envision an id-dominated person, think of a newborn infant crying out for satisfaction, caring nothing for the outside world's conditions and demands. Or think of people with a present rather than future time perspective—those who abuse tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, and would sooner party now than sacrifice today's pleasure for future success and happiness (Keough et al., 1999).

As the **ego** develops, the young child responds to the real world. The ego, operating on the *reality principle*, seeks to gratify the id's impulses in realistic ways that will bring long-term pleasure. (Imagine what would happen if, lacking an ego, we expressed all our unrestrained sexual or aggressive impulses.) The ego contains our partly conscious perceptions, thoughts, judgments, and memories.

Around age 4 or 5, Freud theorized, a child's ego recognizes the demands of the newly emerging **superego**, the voice of our moral compass (conscience) that forces the ego to consider not only the real but the *ideal*. The superego focuses on how we *ought* to behave. It strives for perfection, judging actions and producing positive feelings of pride or negative feelings of guilt. Someone with an exceptionally strong superego may be virtuous yet guilt-ridden; another with a weak superego may be wantonly self-indulgent and remorseless.

Because the superego's demands often oppose the id's, the ego struggles to reconcile the two. It is the personality "executive," mediating among the impulsive demands of the id, the restraining demands of the superego, and the real-life demands of the external world. If chaste Jane feels sexually attracted to John, she may satisfy both id and superego by joining a volunteer organization that John attends regularly.

Personality Development

55-3 What developmental stages did Freud propose?

Analysis of his patients' histories convinced Freud that personality forms during life's first few years. He concluded that children pass through a series of **psychosexual stages**, during which the id's pleasure-seeking energies focus on distinct pleasure-sensitive areas of the body called *erogenous zones* (**TABLE 55.1**). Each stage offers its own challenges, which Freud saw as conflicting tendencies.

Table 55.1 Freud's Psychosexual Stages

Stage	Focus
Oral (0–18 months)	Pleasure centers on the mouth—sucking, biting, chewing
Anal (18–36 months)	Pleasure focuses on bowel and bladder elimination; coping with demands for control
Phallic (3–6 years)	Pleasure zone is the genitals; coping with incestuous sexual feelings
Latency (6 to puberty)	A phase of dormant sexual feelings
Genital (puberty on)	Maturation of sexual interests

Freud believed that during the *phallic stage*, for example, boys seek genital stimulation, and they develop both unconscious sexual desires for their mother and jealousy and hatred for their father, whom they consider a rival. Given these feelings, he thought boys also experience guilt and a lurking fear of punishment, perhaps by castration, from their father. Freud called this collection of feelings the **Oedipus complex** after the Greek legend of Oedipus, who unknowingly killed his father and married his mother. Some psychoanalysts in Freud's era believed that girls experienced a parallel *Electra complex*.

Children eventually cope with the threatening feelings, said Freud, by repressing them and by identifying with (trying to become like) the rival parent. It's as though something inside the child decides, "If you can't beat 'em [the parent of the same sex], join 'em." Through this **identification** process, children's superegos gain strength as they incorporate many of their parents' values. Freud believed that identification with the same-sex parent provides what psychologists now call our *gender identity*—our sense of being male or female.



David Myers

Identification I want to be like Dad.

id a reservoir of unconscious psychic energy that, according to Freud, strives to satisfy basic sexual and aggressive drives. The id operates on the *pleasure principle*, demanding immediate gratification.

ego the largely conscious, "executive" part of personality that, according to Freud, mediates among the demands of the id, superego, and reality. The ego operates on the *reality principle*, satisfying the id's desires in ways that will realistically bring pleasure rather than pain.

superego the part of personality that, according to Freud, represents internalized ideals and provides standards for judgment (the conscience) and for future aspirations.

psychosexual stages the childhood stages of development (oral, anal, phallic, latency, genital) during which, according to Freud, the id's pleasure-seeking energies focus on distinct erogenous zones.

Oedipus [ED-uh-puss] **complex** according to Freud, a boy's sexual desires toward his mother and feelings of jealousy and hatred for the rival father.

identification the process by which, according to Freud, children incorporate their parents' values into their developing superegos.

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"Oh, for goodness' sake! Smoke!"

Freud presumed that our early childhood relations—especially with our parents and caregivers—**influence our developing identity, personality, and frailties.**

In Freud's view, conflicts unresolved during earlier psychosexual stages could surface as maladaptive behavior in the adult years. At any point in the oral, anal, or phallic stages, strong conflict could lock, or **fixate**, the person's pleasure-seeking energies in that stage. A person who had been either orally overindulged or deprived (perhaps by abrupt, early weaning) might fixate at the oral stage. This orally fixated adult could exhibit either passive dependence (like that of a nursing infant) or an exaggerated denial of this dependence (by acting tough or uttering biting sarcasm). Or the person might continue to seek oral gratification by smoking or excessive eating. In such ways, Freud suggested, the twig of personality is bent at an early age.

Freud's ideas of sexuality were controversial in his own time. "Freud was called a dirty-minded pansexualist and Viennese libertine," notes historian of psychology Morton Hunt (2007, p. 211). Today his ideas of Oedipal conflict and castration anxiety are disputed even by later *psychodynamic* theorists and therapists (see Module 56) (Shedler, 2010b). Yet we still teach them as part of the history of Western ideas.

Defense Mechanisms

55-4 How did Freud think people defend themselves against anxiety?

Anxiety, said Freud, is the price we pay for civilization. As members of social groups, we must control our sexual and aggressive impulses, not act them out. But sometimes the ego fears losing control of this inner war between the id and superego. The presumed result is a dark cloud of unfocused anxiety that leaves us feeling unsettled but unsure why.

Freud proposed that the ego protects itself with **defense mechanisms**—tactics that reduce or redirect anxiety by distorting reality. Defense mechanisms protect our self-understanding. For Freud, *all defense mechanisms function indirectly and unconsciously*. Just as the body unconsciously defends itself against disease, so also does the ego unconsciously defend itself against anxiety. For example, **repression** banishes anxiety-arousing wishes and feelings from consciousness. According to Freud, *repression underlies all the other defense mechanisms*. However, because repression is often incomplete, repressed urges may appear as symbols in dreams or as slips of the tongue in casual conversation. **TABLE 55.2** describes a sampling of seven other well-known defense mechanisms.

Regression: Faced with a mild stressor, children and young orangutans will seek protection and comfort from their caregivers. Freud might have interpreted these behaviors as regression, a retreat to an earlier developmental stage.



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Table 55.2 Seven Defense Mechanisms

Freud believed that *repression*, the basic mechanism that banishes anxiety-arousing impulses, enables other defense mechanisms, seven of which are listed here.

Defense Mechanism	Unconscious Process Employed to Avoid Anxiety-Arousing Thoughts or Feelings	Example
<i>Regression</i>	Retreating to a more infantile psychosexual stage, where some psychic energy remains fixated.	A little boy reverts to the oral comfort of thumb sucking in the car on the way to his first day of school.
<i>Reaction formation</i>	Switching unacceptable impulses into their opposites.	Repressing angry feelings, a person displays exaggerated friendliness.
<i>Projection</i>	Disguising one's own threatening impulses by attributing them to others.	"The thief thinks everyone else is a thief" (an El Salvadoran saying).
<i>Rationalization</i>	Offering self-justifying explanations in place of the real, more threatening unconscious reasons for one's actions.	A habitual drinker says she drinks with her friends "just to be sociable."
<i>Displacement</i>	Shifting sexual or aggressive impulses toward a more acceptable or less threatening object or person.	A little girl kicks the family dog after her mother sends her to her room.
<i>Sublimation</i>	Transferring of unacceptable impulses into socially valued motives.	A man with aggressive urges becomes a surgeon.
<i>Denial</i>	Refusing to believe or even perceive painful realities.	A partner denies evidence of his loved one's affair.

AP® Exam Tip

The differences between these defense mechanisms aren't always clear. For example, *repression* can be found in almost every example. Focus on the key feature of each given example. If the key feature is seeing your own impulse in someone else, it's projection. If the key feature is shifting your aggression from one target to another, it's displacement.

Evaluating Freud's Psychoanalytic Perspective

55-5 How do contemporary psychologists view Freud's psychoanalysis?

Modern Research Contradicts Many of Freud's Ideas

We critique Freud from an early twenty-first-century perspective, a perspective that itself will be subject to revision. Freud did not have access to neurotransmitter or DNA studies, or to all that we have since learned about human development, thinking, and emotion. To criticize his theory by comparing it with today's thinking, some say, is like criticizing Henry Ford's Model T by comparing it with today's hybrid cars. (How tempting it always is to judge people in the past from our perspective in the present.)

But both Freud's admirers and his critics agree that recent research contradicts many of his specific ideas. Today's developmental psychologists see our development as lifelong, not fixed in childhood. They doubt that infants' neural networks are mature enough to sustain as much emotional trauma as Freud assumed. Some think Freud overestimated parental influence and underestimated peer influence. They also doubt that conscience and gender identity form as the child resolves the Oedipus complex at age 5 or 6. We gain our gender identity earlier and become strongly masculine or feminine even without a same-sex parent present. And they note that Freud's ideas about childhood sexuality arose from his skepticism of stories of childhood sexual abuse told by his female patients—stories that some scholars believe he attributed to their own childhood sexual wishes and conflicts (Esterson, 2001; Powell & Boer, 1994).

"Many aspects of Freudian theory are indeed out of date, and they should be: Freud died in 1939, and he has been slow to undertake further revisions."
-PSYCHOLOGIST DREW WESTEN (1998)



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"We are arguing like a man who should say, 'If there were an invisible cat in that chair, the chair would look empty; but the chair does look empty; therefore there is an invisible cat in it.'" -C. S. LEWIS, *FOUR LOVES*, 1958

As we saw in Module 24, new ideas about why we dream dispute Freud's belief that dreams disguise and fulfill wishes. And slips of the tongue can be explained as competition between similar verbal choices in our memory network. Someone who says "I don't want to do that—it's a lot of brothel" may simply be blending *bother* and *trouble* (Foss & Hakes, 1978). Researchers find little support for Freud's idea that defense mechanisms disguise sexual and aggressive impulses (though our cognitive gymnastics do indeed work to protect our self-esteem). History also has failed to support another of Freud's ideas—that suppressed sexuality causes psychological disorders. From Freud's time to ours, sexual inhibition has diminished; psychological disorders have not.

Psychologists also criticize Freud's theory for its scientific shortcomings. Recall from Module 5 that good scientific theories explain observations and offer testable hypotheses. Freud's theory rests on few objective observations, and parts of it offer few testable hypotheses. (For Freud, his own recollections and interpretations of patients' free associations, dreams, and slips were evidence enough.)

What is the most serious problem with Freud's theory? It offers after-the-fact explanations of any characteristic (of one person's smoking, another's fear of horses, another's sexual orientation) yet fails to *predict* such behaviors and traits. If you feel angry at your mother's death, you illustrate his theory because "your unresolved childhood dependency needs are threatened." If you do not feel angry, you again illustrate his theory because "you are repressing your anger." That, said Calvin Hall and Gardner Lindzey (1978, p. 68), "is like betting on a horse after the race has been run." A good theory makes testable predictions.



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So, should psychology post an "Allow Natural Death" order on this old theory? Freud's supporters object. To criticize Freudian theory for not making testable predictions is, they say, like criticizing baseball for not being an aerobic exercise, something it was never intended to be. Freud never claimed that psychoanalysis was predictive science. He merely claimed that, looking back, psychoanalysts could find meaning in their clients' state of mind (Rieff, 1979).

Supporters also note that some of Freud's ideas *are* enduring. It was Freud who drew our attention to the unconscious and the irrational, to our self-protective defenses, to the importance of human sexuality, and to the tension between our biological impulses and our social well-being. It was Freud who challenged our self-righteousness, punctured our pretensions, and reminded us of our potential for evil.

Modern Research Challenges the Idea of Repression

Psychoanalytic theory rests on the assumption that the human mind often *represses* offending wishes, banishing them into the unconscious until they resurface, like long-lost books in a dusty attic. Recover and resolve childhood's conflicted wishes, and emotional healing should follow. Repression became a widely accepted concept, used to explain hypnotic phenomena and psychological disorders. Some of Freud's followers extended repression to explain apparently lost and recovered memories of childhood traumas (Boag, 2006; Cheit, 1998; Erdelyi,

2006). In one survey, 88 percent of university students believed that painful experiences commonly get pushed out of awareness and into the unconscious (Garry et al., 1994).

Today's researchers agree that we sometimes spare our egos by neglecting threatening information (Green et al., 2008). Yet, many contend that repression, if it ever occurs, is a rare mental response to terrible trauma. Even those who have witnessed a parent's murder or survived Nazi death camps retain their unpressed memories of the horror (Helmreich, 1992, 1994; Malmquist, 1986; Pennebaker, 1990). "Dozens of formal studies have yielded not a single convincing case of repression in the entire literature on trauma," concluded personality researcher John Kihlstrom (2006).

Some researchers do believe that extreme, prolonged stress, such as the stress some severely abused children experience, might disrupt memory by damaging the hippocampus (Schacter, 1996). But the far more common reality is that high stress and associated stress hormones *enhance* memory (see Module 32). Indeed, rape, torture, and other traumatic events haunt survivors, who experience unwanted flashbacks. They are seared onto the soul. "You see the babies," said Holocaust survivor Sally H. (1979). "You see the screaming mothers. You see hanging people. You sit and you see that face there. It's something you don't forget."

"The overall findings . . . seriously challenge the classical psychoanalytic notion of repression." -PSYCHOLOGIST YACOV ROFÉ, "DOES REPRESSION EXIST?" 2008

Before You Move On

► ASK YOURSELF

Which of Freud's presumed defense mechanisms have you found yourself employing?

► TEST YOURSELF

How does today's psychological science assess Freud's theory?

Answers to the Test Yourself questions can be found in Appendix E at the end of the book.

"During the Holocaust, many children . . . were forced to endure the unendurable. For those who continue to suffer [the] pain is still present, many years later, as real as it was on the day it occurred." -ERIC ZILLMER, MOLLY HARROWER, BARRY RITZLER, AND ROBERT ARCHER, *THE QUEST FOR THE NAZI PERSONALITY*, 1995

Module 55 Review

- *Personality* is an individual's characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting.
- Sigmund Freud's theory of *psychoanalysis* is not the most important theory in psychology, but his famous work is historically and culturally significant.

55-1 How did Sigmund Freud's treatment of psychological disorders lead to his view of the unconscious mind?

- In treating patients whose disorders had no clear physical explanation, Freud concluded that these problems reflected unacceptable thoughts and feelings, hidden away in the *unconscious* mind.
- To explore this hidden part of a patient's mind, Freud used *free association* and dream analysis.

55-2 What was Freud's view of personality?

- Freud believed that personality results from conflict arising from the interaction among the mind's three systems: the *id* (pleasure-seeking impulses), *ego* (reality-oriented executive), and *superego* (internalized set of ideals, or conscience).

55-3 What developmental stages did Freud propose?

- Freud believed children pass through five *psychosexual stages* (oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital).
- Unresolved conflicts at any stage can leave a person's pleasure-seeking impulses *fixated* (stalled) at that stage.

55-4 How did Freud think people defend themselves against anxiety?

- For Freud, anxiety was the product of tensions between the demands of the id and superego. The ego copes by using unconscious *defense mechanisms*, such as *repression*, which he viewed as the basic mechanism underlying and enabling all the others.

55-5 How do contemporary psychologists view Freud's psychoanalysis?

- Today's psychologists give Freud credit for drawing attention to the vast unconscious, to the importance of our sexuality, and to the conflict between biological impulses and social restraints.
- But Freud's concept of repression, and his view of the unconscious as a collection of repressed and unacceptable thoughts, wishes, feelings, and memories, have not survived scientific scrutiny. Freud offered after-the-fact explanations, which are hard to test scientifically.
- Research does not support many of Freud's specific ideas, such as the view that development is fixed in childhood. (We now know it is lifelong.)

Multiple-Choice Questions

- Free association is
 - a method of exploring the unconscious.
 - another name for hypnosis.
 - the major function of the superego.
 - an ego defense mechanism.
 - a method of dream analysis.
- According to Freud, which of the following is true of the ego?
 - It focuses on how we ought to behave.
 - It is the source of guilt.
 - It is the part of the personality present at birth.
 - It strives to satisfy basic drives.
 - It operates under the reality principle.
- Which of the following represents Freud's Oedipus complex?
 - Yutao has begun to suffer from the same recurrent nightmares he had as a child.
 - Madeline manifests repressed anxiety because of guilt she experienced when she disappointed her parents during toilet training.
 - Five-year-old Anatha is taking on many of her mother's values through a process of identification.
 - Four-year-old Carlos is experiencing unconscious sexual desire for his mother and unconscious hatred for his father.
 - Elle has begun to overeat and smoke cigarettes as a college student, indicating a degree of oral fixation.
- According to Freud, which of the following defense mechanisms underlies all of the others?

a. Repression	d. Projection
b. Reaction formation	e. Regression
c. Displacement	

Practice FRQs

- Name what Freud believed to be the three parts of the mind and describe the role of each.

Answer

1 point: The conscious mind is what a person is aware of.

1 point: The preconscious mind is a temporary holding place from which memories and feelings can be easily retrieved.

1 point: The unconscious mind is the hidden holding place for unacceptable passions and thoughts.

- Nadina is struggling to decide whether to buy a new sweater that she really cannot afford. What role would each of the three parts of her personality (as theorized by Freud) play in her decision?

(3 points)

Module 56

Psychodynamic Theories and Modern Views of the Unconscious

Module Learning Objectives

- 56-1** Identify which of Freud's ideas were accepted or rejected by his followers.
- 56-2** Describe projective tests and how they are used, and discuss some criticisms of them.
- 56-3** Describe the modern view of the unconscious.



Pychodynamic theories of personality view our behavior as emerging from the interaction between the conscious and unconscious mind, including associated motives and conflicts. These theories are descended from Freud's historical *psychoanalytic theory*, but the modern-day approaches differ in important ways.

psychodynamic theories

modern-day approaches that view personality with a focus on the unconscious and the importance of childhood experiences.

The Neo-Freudian and Psychodynamic Theorists

- 56-1** Which of Freud's ideas did his followers accept or reject?

Freud's writings were controversial, but they soon attracted followers, mostly young, ambitious physicians who formed an inner circle around their strong-minded leader. These pioneering psychoanalysts, whom we often call *neo-Freudians*, accepted Freud's basic ideas: the personality structures of id, ego, and superego; the importance of the unconscious; the shaping of personality in childhood; and the dynamics of anxiety and the defense mechanisms. But they broke off from Freud in two important ways. First, they placed more emphasis on the conscious mind's role in interpreting experience and in coping with the environment. And second, they doubted that sex and aggression were all-consuming motivations. Instead, they tended to emphasize loftier motives and social interactions.

Alfred Adler and Karen Horney [HORN-eye], for example, agreed with Freud that childhood is important. But they believed that childhood *social*, not sexual, tensions are crucial for personality formation (Ferguson, 2003). Adler (who had proposed the still-popular idea of the *inferiority complex*) himself struggled to overcome childhood illnesses and accidents, and he believed that much of our behavior is driven by efforts to conquer childhood inferiority feelings that trigger our strivings for superiority and power. Horney said childhood anxiety triggers our desire for love and security. She also countered Freud's assumptions, arising as they did in his conservative culture, that women have weak superegos and suffer "penis envy," and she attempted to balance the bias she detected in his masculine view of psychology.



Alfred Adler "The individual feels at home in life and feels his existence to be worthwhile just so far as he is useful to others and is overcoming feelings of inferiority" (*Problems of Neurosis*, 1964).



Karen Horney "The view that women are infantile and emotional creatures, and as such, incapable of responsibility and independence is the work of the masculine tendency to lower women's self-respect" (*Feminine Psychology*, 1932).

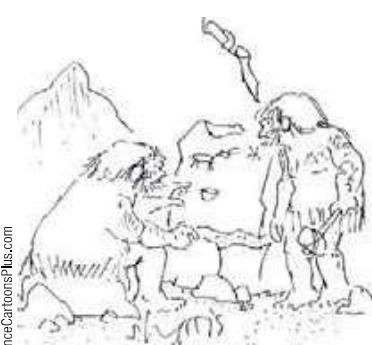


Carl Jung "From the living fountain of instinct flows everything that is creative; hence the unconscious is the very source of the creative impulse" (*The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, 1960).

collective unconscious Carl Jung's concept of a shared, inherited reservoir of memory traces from our species' history.

Carl Jung—Freud's disciple-turned-dissenter—placed less emphasis on social factors and agreed with Freud that the unconscious exerts a powerful influence. But to Jung [Yoong], the unconscious contains more than our repressed thoughts and feelings. He believed we also have a **collective unconscious**, a common reservoir of images, or *archetypes*, derived from our species' universal experiences. Jung said that the collective unconscious explains why, for many people, spiritual concerns are deeply rooted and why people in different cultures share certain myths and images, such as mother as a symbol of nurturance. (Most of today's psychodynamic psychologists discount the idea of inherited experiences. But many psychodynamic and other psychological theorists do believe that our shared evolutionary history shaped some universal dispositions.)

Some of Freud's ideas have been incorporated into the diversity of modern perspectives that make up psychodynamic theory. "Most contemporary [psychodynamic] theorists and therapists are not wedded to the idea that sex is the basis of personality," noted Drew Westen (1996). They "do not talk about ids and egos, and do not go around classifying their patients as oral, anal, or phallic characters." What they do assume, with Freud and with much support from today's psychological science, is that much of our mental life is unconscious. With Freud, they also assume that we often struggle with inner conflicts among our wishes, fears, and values, and that childhood shapes our personality and ways of becoming attached to others.



"The forward thrust of the antlers shows a determined personality, yet the small sun indicates a lack of self-confidence. . . ."

Assessing Unconscious Processes

56-2 What are projective tests, how are they used, and what are some criticisms of them?

Personality assessment tools are useful to those who study personality or provide therapy. Such tools differ because they are tailored to specific theories. How might psychodynamic clinicians attempt to assess personality characteristics?

The first requirement would be some sort of a road into the unconscious, to unearth the residue of early childhood experiences, to move beneath surface pretensions and reveal hidden conflicts and impulses. Objective assessment tools, such as agree-disagree or true-false questionnaires, would be inadequate because they would merely tap the conscious surface.

Projective tests aim to provide this “psychological X-ray” by asking test-takers to describe an ambiguous stimulus or tell a story about it. Henry Murray introduced one such test, the **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)**, in which a person views an ambiguous picture and then makes up a story about it (**FIGURE 56.1**). The clinician may presume that any hopes, desires, and fears that people see in the ambiguous image are projections of their own inner feelings or conflicts.

The most widely used projective test left some blots on the name of Swiss psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach [ROAR-shock]. He based his famous **Rorschach inkblot test**, in which people describe what they see in a series of inkblots (**FIGURE 56.2**), on a childhood game. He and his friends would drip ink on a paper, fold it, and then say what they saw in the resulting blot (Sdorow, 2005). Do you see predatory animals or weapons? Perhaps you have aggressive tendencies. But is this a reasonable assumption?

Clinicians’ and critics’ answers differ. Some clinicians cherish the Rorschach, even offering Rorschach-based assessments of criminals’ violence potential to judges. Others view it as a helpful diagnostic tool, a source of suggestive leads, or an icebreaker and a revealing interview technique. The Society for Personality Assessment (2005) commends “its responsible use” (which would *not* include inferring past childhood sexual abuse). And—in response to past criticisms of test scoring and interpretation (Sechrist et al., 1998)—a research-based, computer-aided tool has been designed to improve agreement among raters and enhance the test’s validity (Erdberg, 1990; Exner, 2003).

But the evidence is insufficient to its revilers, who insist the Rorschach is no emotional MRI. They argue that only a few of the many Rorschach-derived scores, such as ones for hostility and anxiety, have demonstrated *validity*—predicting what they are supposed to predict (Wood, 2006). Moreover, they say, these tests do not yield consistent results—they are not *reliable*. Inkblot assessments diagnose many normal adults as pathological (Wood et al., 2003, 2006, 2010). Alternative projective assessment techniques fare little better. “Even seasoned professionals can be fooled by their intuitions and their faith in tools that lack strong evidence of effectiveness,” warned Scott Lilienfeld, James Wood, and Howard Garb (2001). “When a substantial body of research demonstrates that old intuitions are wrong, it is time to adopt new ways of thinking.”



Lewis J. Merrin/Science Source

Figure 56.1

The TAT This clinician presumes that the hopes, fears, and interests expressed in this boy’s descriptions of a series of ambiguous pictures in the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) are projections of his inner feelings.

“The Rorschach Inkblot Test has been resoundingly discredited. I call it the Dracula of psychological tests, because no one has been able to drive a stake through the cursed thing’s heart.” -CAROL TAVRIS, “MIND GAMES: PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE BETWEEN THERAPISTS AND SCIENTISTS,” 2003

“We don’t see things as they are; we see things as we are.” -THE TALMUD



Stanley Goldfarb/Science Source

Figure 56.2

The Rorschach test In this projective test, people tell what they see in a series of symmetrical inkblots. Some who use this test are confident that the interpretation of ambiguous stimuli will reveal unconscious aspects of the test-taker’s personality.

projective test a personality test, such as the Rorschach, that provides ambiguous stimuli designed to trigger projection of one’s inner dynamics.

Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) a projective test in which people express their inner feelings and interests through the stories they make up about ambiguous scenes.

Rorschach inkblot test the most widely used projective test, a set of 10 inkblots, designed by Hermann Rorschach; seeks to identify people’s inner feelings by analyzing their interpretations of the blots.

AP® Exam Tip

It's very important to understand the differences between Freud's view of the unconscious and modern psychology's view of the unconscious. Read this section carefully.

The Modern Unconscious Mind

56-3 How has modern research developed our understanding of the unconscious?

Freud was right about a big idea that underlies today's psychodynamic thinking: We indeed have limited access to all that goes on in our minds (Erdelyi, 1985, 1988, 2006; Norman, 2010). Our two-track mind has a vast out-of-sight realm.

Nevertheless, many of today's research psychologists now think of the unconscious not as seething passions and repressive censoring but as cooler information processing that occurs without our awareness. To these researchers, the unconscious also involves

- the schemas that automatically control our perceptions and interpretations (Module 17).
- the priming by stimuli to which we have not consciously attended (Modules 16 and 32).
- the right hemisphere brain activity that enables the split-brain patient's left hand to carry out an instruction the patient cannot verbalize (Module 13).
- the implicit memories that operate without conscious recall, even among those with amnesia (Module 33).
- the emotions that activate instantly, before conscious analysis (Module 41).
- the self-concept and stereotypes that automatically and unconsciously influence how we process information about ourselves and others (Module 77).

More than we realize, we fly on autopilot. Our lives are guided by off-screen, out-of-sight, unconscious information processing. The unconscious mind is huge. This understanding of unconscious information processing is more like the pre-Freudian view of an underground, unattended stream of thought from which spontaneous behavior and creative ideas surface (Bargh & Morsella, 2008).

Research has also supported Freud's idea of our unconscious defense mechanisms. For example, Roy Baumeister and his colleagues (1998) found that people tend to see their foibles and attitudes in others, a phenomenon that Freud called projection and that today's researchers call the **false consensus effect**, the tendency to overestimate the extent to which others share our beliefs and behaviors. People who cheat on their taxes or break speed limits tend to think many others do likewise. People who are happy, kind, and trustworthy tend to see others as the same (Wood et al., 2010).

Evidence also confirms the unconscious mechanisms that defend self-esteem, such as reaction formation. Defense mechanisms, Baumeister concluded, are motivated less by the seething impulses that Freud presumed than by our need to protect our self-image.

Finally, recent history has supported Freud's idea that we unconsciously defend ourselves against anxiety. Jeff Greenberg, Sheldon Solomon, and Tom Pyszczynski (1997) proposed that one source of anxiety is "the terror resulting from our awareness of vulnerability and death." Nearly 300 experiments testing their **terror-management theory** show that thinking about one's mortality—for example, by writing a short essay on dying and its associated emotions—provokes various terror-management defenses (Burke et al., 2010). For example, death anxiety increases contempt for others and esteem for oneself (Koole et al., 2006).

Faced with a threatening world, people act not only to enhance their self-esteem but also to adhere more strongly to worldviews that answer questions about life's meaning. The prospect of death promotes religious sentiments, and deep religious convictions enable people to be less defensive—less likely to rise in defense of their worldview—when reminded of death (Jonas & Fischer, 2006; Norenzayan & Hansen, 2006). Moreover, when contemplating death, people cleave to close relationships (Mikulincer et al., 2003). The



"It says, 'Someday you will die.'"

"I don't want to attain immortality through my work; I want to attain immortality by not dying." -FILM DIRECTOR AND ACTOR WOODY ALLEN

events of 9/11—a striking experience of the terror of death—led trapped World Trade Center occupants to spend their last moments calling loved ones, and led most Americans to reach out to family and friends.

"I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me out of all my terror." -PSALM 34:4

Before You Move On

► ASK YOURSELF

What understanding and impressions of Freud did you bring to this unit? Are you surprised to find that some of his ideas (especially the big idea of our unconscious mind) had merit?

► TEST YOURSELF

What methods have been used by psychodynamic clinicians to assess unconscious processes?

Answers to the Test Yourself questions can be found in Appendix E at the end of the book.

Module 56 Review

- *Psychodynamic theories*, which descended from Freud's historically important work, view personality from the perspective that behavior is a dynamic interaction between the conscious and unconscious mind.
- **56-1** Which of Freud's ideas did his followers accept or reject?
 - Freud's early followers, the neo-Freudians, accepted many of his ideas. They differed in placing more emphasis on the conscious mind and in stressing social motives more than sexual or aggression motives.
 - Contemporary psychodynamic theorists and therapists reject Freud's emphasis on sexual motivation. They stress, with support from modern research findings, the view that much of our mental life is unconscious, and they believe that our childhood experiences influence our adult personality and attachment patterns.

56-2 What are projective tests, how are they used, and what are some criticisms of them?

- *Projective tests* attempt to assess personality by showing people vague stimuli with many possible interpretations; answers reveal unconscious motives.
- One such test, the *Rorschach inkblot test*, has low reliability and validity.

56-3 How has modern research developed our understanding of the unconscious?

- Current research confirms that we do not have full access to all that goes on in our mind, but the current view of the unconscious is not that of a hidden storehouse filled with repressed feelings and thoughts.
- Researchers see the unconscious as a separate and parallel track of information processing that occurs outside our awareness, such as schemas that control our perceptions; priming; implicit memories of learned skills; instantly activated emotions; self-concepts and stereotypes that filter information about ourselves and others; and mechanisms that defend our self-esteem and deter anxiety, such as the *false consensus effect/projection* and *terror management*.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- 1.** What did Carl Jung call the shared, inherited reservoir of memory traces from our species' history?
 - a. Neurosis
 - b. Archetypes
 - c. Collective unconscious
 - d. Inferiority complex
 - e. Terror management

- 2.** Scott Lilienfeld, James Wood, and Howard Garb (2001) wrote, "When a substantial body of research demonstrates that old intuitions are wrong, it is time to adopt new ways of thinking." What were they talking about?
 - a. MRI test
 - b. Rorschach inkblot test
 - c. Freud's work on the id and ego
 - d. Psychodynamic theories
 - e. Modern views of the unconscious

- 3.** According to the text, many research psychologists think of _____ as an information processor that works without our awareness.
 - a. the TAT
 - b. the id
 - c. repression
 - d. defense mechanisms
 - e. the unconscious

Practice FRQs

- 1.** Name and accurately describe two projective tests.

Answer

1 point: Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)

1 point: In the TAT, someone is asked to tell a story about a picture.

1 point: Rorschach Inkblot Test

1 point: In the Rorschach, someone is asked to state what he or she sees in an inkblot.

- 2.** Explain and give an example of the false consensus effect.

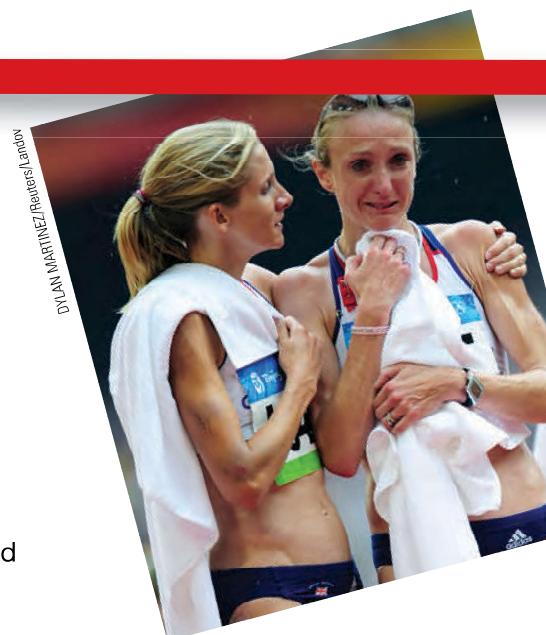
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Module 57

Humanistic Theories

Module Learning Objectives

- 57-1** Describe how humanistic psychologists viewed personality, and explain their goal in studying personality.
- 57-2** Explain how humanistic psychologists assessed a person's sense of self.
- 57-3** Describe how humanistic theories have influenced psychology, and discuss the criticisms they have faced.



- 57-1** How did humanistic psychologists view personality, and what was their goal in studying personality?

By the 1960s, some personality psychologists had become discontented with the sometimes bleak focus on drives and conflicts in psychodynamic theory and the mechanistic psychology of B. F. Skinner's behaviorism (see Modules 27 and 28). In contrast to Freud's study of the base motives of "sick" people, these **humanistic theorists** focused on the ways people strive for self-determination and self-realization. In contrast to behaviorism's scientific objectivity, they studied people through their own self-reported experiences and feelings.

Two pioneering theorists—Abraham Maslow (1908–1970) and Carl Rogers (1902–1987)—offered a "third-force" perspective that emphasized human potential. Like *psychoanalytic theory*, the humanistic theories have been an important part of psychology's history.

Abraham Maslow's Self-Actualizing Person

Maslow proposed that we are motivated by a *hierarchy of needs* (Module 37). If our physiological needs are met, we become concerned with personal safety; if we achieve a sense of security, we then seek to love, to be loved, and to love ourselves; with our love needs satisfied, we seek self-esteem. Having achieved self-esteem, we ultimately seek **self-actualization** (the process of fulfilling our potential) and *self-transcendence* (meaning, purpose, and communion beyond the self).

Maslow (1970) developed his ideas by studying healthy, creative people rather than troubled clinical cases. He based his description of self-actualization on a study of those, such as Abraham Lincoln, who seemed notable for their rich and productive lives. Maslow reported that such people shared certain characteristics: They were self-aware and self-accepting, open and spontaneous, loving and caring, and not paralyzed by others' opinions. Secure in their sense of who they were, their interests were problem-centered rather than self-centered. They focused their energies on a particular task, one they often regarded as their mission in life.

humanistic theories view personality with a focus on the potential for healthy personal growth.

self-actualization according to Maslow, one of the ultimate psychological needs that arises after basic physical and psychological needs are met and self-esteem is achieved; the motivation to fulfill one's potential.



Abraham Maslow (1908–1970)

"Any theory of motivation that is worthy of attention must deal with the highest capacities of the healthy and strong person as well as with the defensive maneuvers of crippled spirits" (*Motivation and Personality*, 1970, p. 33).

Most enjoyed a few deep relationships rather than many superficial ones. Many had been moved by spiritual or personal *peak experiences* that surpassed ordinary consciousness.

These, said Maslow, are mature adult qualities, ones found in those who have learned enough about life to be compassionate, to have outgrown their mixed feelings toward their parents, to have found their calling, to have "acquired enough courage to be unpopular, to be unashamed about being openly virtuous, etc." Maslow's work with college students led him to speculate that those likely to become self-actualizing adults were likable, caring, "privately affectionate to those of their elders who deserve it," and "secretly uneasy about the cruelty, meanness, and mob spirit so often found in young people."

Carl Rogers' Person-Centered Perspective

Fellow humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers agreed with much of Maslow's thinking. Rogers believed that people are basically good and are endowed with self-actualizing tendencies. Unless thwarted by an environment that inhibits growth, each of us is like an acorn, primed for growth and fulfillment. Rogers' (1980) *person-centered perspective* (also called *client-centered perspective*) held that a growth-promoting climate required three conditions.

- **Genuineness:** When people are *genuine*, they are open with their own feelings, drop their facades, and are transparent and self-disclosing.
- **Acceptance:** When people are *accepting*, they offer **unconditional positive regard**, an attitude of grace that values us even knowing our failings. It is a profound relief to drop our pretenses, confess our worst feelings, and discover that we are still accepted. In a good marriage, a close family, or an intimate friendship, we are free to be spontaneous without fearing the loss of others' esteem.
- **Empathy:** When people are *empathic*, they share and mirror other's feelings and reflect their meanings. "Rarely do we listen with real understanding, true empathy," said Rogers. "Yet listening, of this very special kind, is one of the most potent forces for change that I know."

Genuineness, acceptance, and empathy are, Rogers believed, the water, sun, and nutrients that enable people to grow like vigorous oak trees. For "as persons are accepted and prized, they tend to develop a more caring attitude toward themselves" (Rogers, 1980, p. 116). As persons are empathically heard, "it becomes possible for them to listen more accurately to the flow of inner experiencing."

Writer Calvin Trillin (2006) recalls an example of parental genuineness and acceptance at a camp for children with severe disorders, where his wife, Alice, worked. L., a "magical child," had genetic diseases that meant she had to be tube-fed and could walk only with difficulty. Alice recalled,

One day, when we were playing duck-duck-goose, I was sitting behind her and she asked me to hold her mail for her while she took her turn to be chased around the circle. It took her a while to make the circuit, and I had time to see that on top of the pile [of mail] was a note from her mom. Then I did something truly awful. . . . I simply had to know what this child's parents could have done to make her so spectacular, to make her the most optimistic, most enthusiastic, most hopeful human being I had ever encountered. I snuck a quick look at the note, and my eyes fell on this sentence: "If God had given us all of the children in the world to choose from, L., we would only have chosen you." Before L. got back to her place in the circle, I showed the note to Bud, who was sitting next to me. "Quick. Read this," I whispered. "It's the secret of life."

Maslow and Rogers would have smiled knowingly. For them a central feature of personality is one's **self-concept**—all the thoughts and feelings we have in response to the question, "Who am I?" If our self-concept is positive, we tend to act and perceive the world

unconditional positive regard according to Rogers, an attitude of total acceptance toward another person.

self-concept all our thoughts and feelings about ourselves, in answer to the question, "Who am I?"

A father *not* offering unconditional positive regard:



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"Just remember, son, it doesn't matter whether you win or lose—unless you want Daddy's love."

positively. If it is negative—if in our own eyes we fall far short of our *ideal self*—said Rogers, we feel dissatisfied and unhappy. A worthwhile goal for therapists, parents, teachers, and friends is therefore, he said, to help others know, accept, and be true to themselves.

Assessing the Self

57-2 How did humanistic psychologists assess a person's sense of self?

Humanistic psychologists sometimes assessed personality by asking people to fill out questionnaires that would evaluate their self-concept. One questionnaire, inspired by Carl Rogers, asked people to describe themselves both as they would *ideally* like to be and as they *actually* are. When the ideal and the actual self are nearly alike, said Rogers, the self-concept is positive. Assessing his clients' personal growth during therapy, he looked for successively closer ratings of actual and ideal selves.

Some humanistic psychologists believed that any standardized assessment of personality, even a questionnaire, is depersonalizing. Rather than forcing the person to respond to narrow categories, these humanistic psychologists presumed that interviews and intimate conversation would provide a better understanding of each person's unique experiences.

AP® Exam Tip

Frequently, terms that begin with “self-” (like *self-actualization* or *self-concept*) are terms that are grounded in the humanistic perspective.

Evaluating Humanistic Theories

57-3 How have humanistic theories influenced psychology? What criticisms have they faced?

One thing said of Freud can also be said of the humanistic psychologists: Their impact has been pervasive. Maslow's and Rogers' ideas have influenced counseling, education, child raising, and management.

They have also influenced—sometimes in ways they did not intend—much of today's popular psychology. Is a positive self-concept the key to happiness and success? Do acceptance and empathy nurture positive feelings about oneself? Are people basically good and capable of self-improvement? Many people answer Yes, Yes, and Yes. Responding to a 1992 *Newsweek* Gallup poll, 9 in 10 people rated self-esteem as very important for “motivating a person to work hard and succeed.” Given a choice, today's North American collegians say they'd rather get a self-esteem boost, such as a compliment or good grade on a paper, than enjoy a favorite food (Bushman et al., 2011). Humanistic psychology's message has been heard.

The prominence of the humanistic perspective set off a backlash of criticism. First, said the critics, its concepts are vague and *subjective*. Consider Maslow's description of self-actualizing people as open, spontaneous, loving, self-accepting, and productive. Is this a scientific description? Isn't it merely a description of the theorist's own values and ideals? Maslow, noted M. Brewster Smith (1978), offered impressions of his own personal heroes. Imagine another theorist who began with a different set of heroes—perhaps Napoleon, John D. Rockefeller, Sr., and Margaret Thatcher. This theorist would likely describe self-actualizing people as “undeterred by others' needs and opinions,” “motivated to achieve,” and “comfortable with power.”

Critics also objected to the idea that, as Rogers put it, “The only question which matters is, ‘Am I living in a way which is deeply satisfying to me, and which truly expresses me?’” (quoted by Wallach & Wallach, 1985). The *individualism* encouraged by humanistic psychology—trusting and acting on one's feelings, being true to oneself, fulfilling oneself—can, the critics have said, lead to self-indulgence, selfishness, and an erosion of moral restraints (Campbell & Specht, 1985; Wallach & Wallach, 1983). Indeed, it is those who focus beyond themselves who are most likely to experience social support, to enjoy life, and to cope effectively with stress (Crandall, 1984).



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"We do pretty well when you stop to think that people are basically good."

Humanistic psychologists reply that a secure, nondefensive self-acceptance is actually the first step toward loving others. Indeed, people who feel intrinsically liked and accepted—for who they are, not just for their achievements—exhibit less-defensive attitudes (Schimel et al., 2001).

A final accusation leveled against humanistic psychology is that it is *naïve*, that it fails to appreciate the reality of our human capacity for evil. Faced with climate change, overpopulation, terrorism, and the spread of nuclear weapons, we may become apathetic from either of two rationalizations. One is a starry-eyed optimism that denies the threat ("People are basically good; everything will work out"). The other is a dark despair ("It's hopeless; why try?"). Action requires enough realism to fuel concern and enough optimism to provide hope. Humanistic psychology, say the critics, encourages the needed hope but not the equally necessary realism about evil.

Before You Move On

► ASK YOURSELF

Have you had someone in your life who accepted you unconditionally? Do you think this person helped you to know yourself better and to develop a better image of yourself?

► TEST YOURSELF

What does it mean to be "empathic"? To be "self-actualized"?

Answers to the Test Yourself questions can be found in Appendix E at the end of the book.

Module 57 Review

57-1 How did humanistic psychologists view personality, and what was their goal in studying personality?

- The *humanistic* psychologists' view of personality focused on the potential for healthy personal growth and people's striving for self-determination and self-realization.
- Abraham Maslow proposed that human motivations form a hierarchy of needs; if basic needs are fulfilled, people will strive toward *self-actualization* and self-transcendence.
- Carl Rogers' person-centered perspective suggested that the ingredients of a growth-promoting environment are genuineness, acceptance (including *unconditional positive regard*), and empathy.
- The *self-concept* was a central feature of personality for both Maslow and Rogers.

57-2 How did humanistic psychologists assess a person's sense of self?

- Some rejected any standardized assessments and relied on interviews and conversations.
- Rogers sometimes used questionnaires in which people described their ideal and actual selves, which he later used to judge progress during therapy.

57-3 How have humanistic theories influenced psychology? What criticisms have they faced?

- Humanistic psychology helped renew interest in the concept of self.
- Critics have said that humanistic psychology's concepts were vague and subjective, its values self-centered, and its assumptions naively optimistic.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- 1.** Which of the following theories offers a special focus on the potential for healthy personal growth?
 - a. Neo-Freudian
 - b. Psychodynamic
 - c. Humanistic
 - d. Behavioral
 - e. Functionalist
- 2.** What do we call the process of fulfilling our potential?
 - a. Free association
 - b. Self-transcendence
 - c. Unconditional positive regard
 - d. Self-concept
 - e. Self-actualization
- 3.** Humanistic psychologists often prefer to assess personality by
 - a. having a person write out answers to questions.
 - b. sitting down and talking to a person.
 - c. getting a person to describe what he or she sees in ambiguous inkblots.
 - d. having a person describe their dreams.
 - e. putting a person in a stressful situation to see how he or she behaves under pressure.
- 4.** Which of the following is an example of unconditional positive regard?
 - a. Mr. and Mrs. Prohaska, who have been married for 37 years, credit the success of their marriage to the fact that each has been able to accept the faults of the other without criticism.
 - b. Seven-year-old Michaela gets her allowance each week whether she does her chores or not.
 - c. Ms. Lopez, a second grade teacher, puts a smiley face sticker on her students' papers when they have done a good job.
 - d. John got a promotion and a raise at work after filling in for a sick manager one day and doing a better job than the manager had done previously.
 - e. Chen's parents usually praise him when he does well and ignore him when he engages in minor misbehavior.

Practice FRQs

- 1.** Describe the three conditions that Carl Rogers believed were necessary for a growth-promoting climate.
- 2.** Describe three criticisms that have been made of humanistic psychology.

Answer

1 point: Genuineness, where people are open with their feelings.

1 point: Acceptance, which includes unconditional positive regard, where people are accepted despite their faults and failures.

1 point: Empathy, where the therapist shares and mirrors the feelings of others.

(3 points)