

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.

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 Anagha 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.

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.)

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- 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?

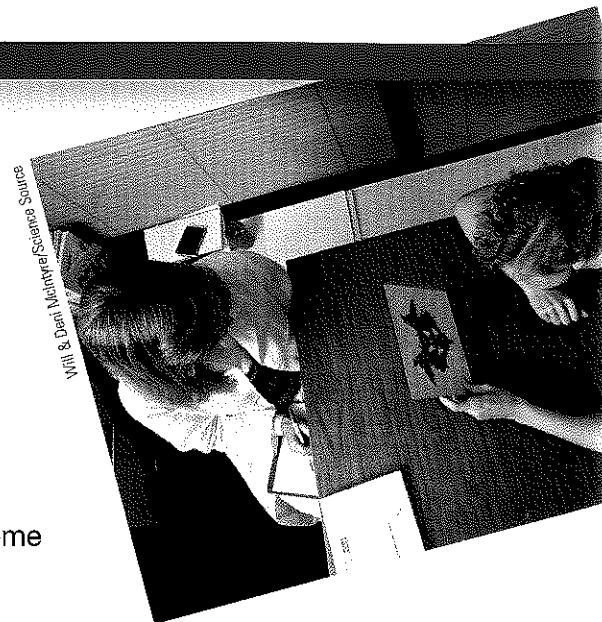
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Module 56

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.



Will & Dent McIntire/Science Source

Psychodynamic 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.

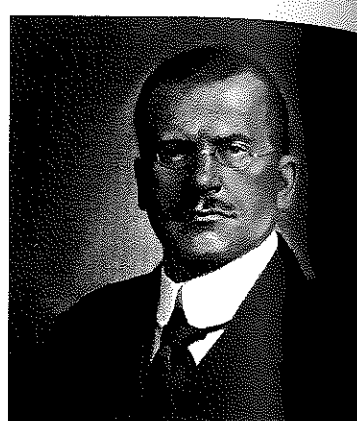
Alfred Adler and Karen Horney [HORN-eye], for example, agreed with Freud that childhood is important. But they believed that childhood *social*, not sexual, tensions are crucial for personality formation (Ferguson, 2003). Adler (who had proposed the still-popular idea of the *inferiority complex*) himself 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.)

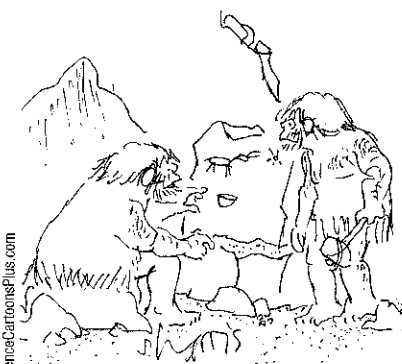
Some of Freud's ideas have been incorporated into the diversity of modern perspectives that make up psychodynamic theory. "Most contemporary [psychodynamic] theorists and therapists are not wedded to the idea that sex is the basis of personality," noted Drew Westen (1996). They "do not talk about ids 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.

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.



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

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 (Sechrest 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."

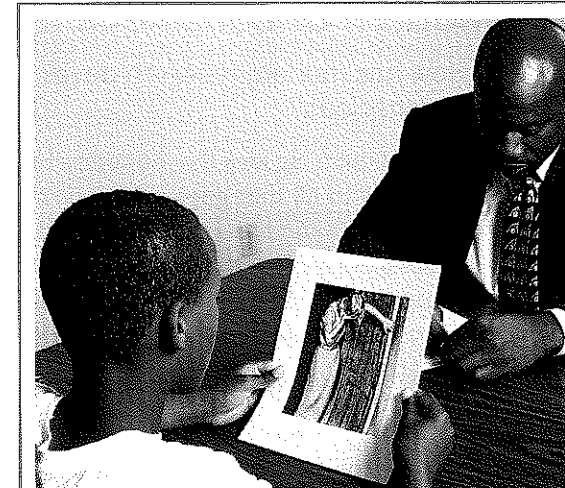


Figure 56.1

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

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.



Stanley Goldblatt/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.

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.

false consensus effect the tendency to overestimate the extent to which others share our beliefs and our behaviors.

terror-management theory a theory of death-related anxiety; explores people's emotional and behavioral responses to reminders of their impending death.

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

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?

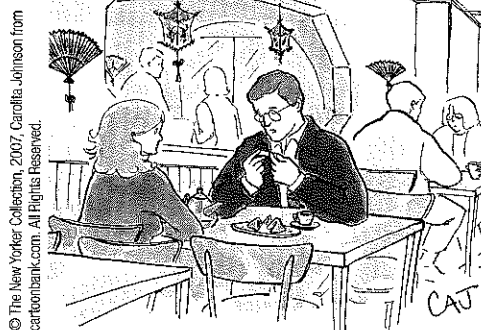
- Freud's early followers, the neo-Freudians, accepted many of his ideas. They differed in placing more emphasis on the conscious mind and in stressing social motives more than sexual or aggression motives.
- Contemporary psychodynamic theorists and therapists reject Freud's emphasis on sexual motivation. 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*.



"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