

to take on masculine characteristics and girls acquire feminine characteristics. Moreover, adopting the parents' values and standards paves the way for the emergence of the superego. However, Freud warned that Oedipal desires are never fully eliminated. Rather, they are merely repressed and have the potential to influence our behavior later in life. Businessmen who aggressively go after rivals are said to be expressing Oedipal urges left over from their earlier competition with their father.

After resolving the Oedipus complex, the child passes into the *latency stage*. Sexual desires abate during these years, and boys and girls are largely uninterested in each other. A look at any playground will verify that boys play with other boys and girls play with other girls. But all that changes with puberty. Erogenous urges return and are focused in the adult genital regions. If a child has progressed to this *genital stage* without leaving large amounts of libido fixated at earlier stages, normal sexual functioning is possible.

Getting at Unconscious Material

If Freud is correct about the nature of the unconscious, it would appear that he has created a problem for himself. If the most important psychological material is buried in a place outside of awareness, how can we study it? Moreover, how can psychotherapists help their clients when the keys to understanding the clients' problems are unavailable for inspection? Not surprisingly, Freud had an answer to this dilemma. He maintained that strong id impulses do not simply disappear when they are pushed out of consciousness. Although the true nature of these impulses is repressed by a strong ego, the impulses are often expressed in a disguised or altered form. If psychologists know what to look for, they can catch a glimpse of unconscious thoughts by observing seemingly innocent behaviors. The following are seven techniques a Freudian psychologist might use to get at unconscious material.

Dreams

“Innocent dreams ... are wolves in sheep's clothing. They turn out to be quite the reverse when we take the trouble to analyze them.”

Sigmund Freud

Freud called dreams the “royal road to the unconscious.” In 1900, he published *The Interpretation of Dreams*, presenting for the first time a psychological theory to explain the meaning of these nighttime dramas. According to Freud, dreams provide id impulses with a stage for expression. They are, in fact, a type of wish fulfillment; our dreams represent the things we desire. This is not to say that we want the unpleasant and frightening things we sometimes dream about to literally come true. Freud drew a distinction between the *manifest content* of a dream (what the dreamer sees and remembers) and the *latent content* (what is really being expressed). Overt expression of many unconscious desires would be difficult to face upon waking. That's why they were repressed in the first place. However, these unacceptable images can safely surface in our dreams in symbolic forms. Dreams involving penises, sexual intercourse, and vaginas might be threatening to the dreamer. But we would have no problem with a dream about fountains, airplane rides, or caves. “The dreamer does know what his dream means,” Freud wrote. “Only he does not know that he knows it, and for that reason thinks he does not know it” (1916/1961, p. 101).

Freud identified many examples of what he called *common dream symbols*. A house represents the human body, one's parents are disguised as king and queen, children

appear as small animals, birth is associated with water, a train journey is a symbol for dying, and clothes and uniforms represent nakedness. Predictably, the vast majority of Freudian dream symbols are sexual. For example, male genitals are said to be represented by objects with a similar shape. Freud (1916/1961) listed several common phallic symbols, including sticks, umbrellas, trees, knives, rifles, pencils, and hammers. Female genitals are symbolically represented by bottles, boxes, rooms, doors, and ships. Sexual intercourse is hidden in such activities as dancing, riding, and climbing. In fact, reading Freud's long list of symbols, it's hard to think of many dreams that can't be interpreted sexually.

Projective Tests

We have all played the game of finding images in cloud formations. One person might describe a sailboat, another sees the Cowardly Lion, and a third can just make out a couple dancing the tango. Of course, there are no real pictures in the clouds. So where are these images coming from? The answer, from a Freudian perspective, is that these responses are projections of material in the perceiver's unconscious mind. The images we see in vague objects like clouds represent another way of getting at unconscious material. **Projective tests** present test takers with ambiguous stimuli and asks them to respond by identifying objects, telling a story, or perhaps drawing a picture. The responses are said to provide insights into what is going on in the unconscious. Some of the projective tests used by psychologists are reviewed later in this chapter.

Free Association

Try this exercise. Find a quiet spot where you won't be disturbed and won't disturb anyone, and take a few minutes to clear your mind of thoughts. Then allow whatever comes into your mind to enter. Say aloud whatever thoughts come to mind, even if they are not what you expect and even if you are a little surprised or embarrassed by what comes out. If you find strange, uncensored ideas flowing into your awareness, you may be experiencing *free association*. Clients undergoing psychoanalysis typically are encouraged to use free association to temporarily bypass the censoring mechanism the ego employs. Ordinarily, we block distasteful, seemingly trivial or silly thoughts to protect ourselves from this material or to keep from sounding foolish. But if we can slip by the ego's roadblocks and obstacles, even for a moment, glimpses into the unconsciousness may be possible.

However, free association is usually not so easy. The ego has invested considerable energy to repress threatening thoughts and is not likely to let them just ease into consciousness. Occasionally, clients slip into long silences. Sometimes they report that nothing comes to mind or endlessly describe unimportant details in an effort to avoid unconscious revelations. But when clients give expression to whatever enters their awareness, both client and therapist may be surprised by what emerges.

Freudian Slips

We all occasionally make slips of the tongue. A husband might refer to his wife by her maiden name or say that her mind is really her "breast" feature. These slips can be embarrassing and funny, but to Freud, they represented unconscious associations that momentarily slipped out. The husband who uses his wife's maiden

name may unconsciously wish he'd never married this woman. We call these misstatements *Freudian slips*.

Hypnosis

Freud's early experiences with hypnosis told him there was more to the human mind than what we can bring into awareness. He came to believe that the ego was somehow put into a suspended state during a deep hypnotic trance, which allowed the hypnotist to bypass the ego and get directly to unconscious material. If we accept that hypnosis is a pipeline to the unconscious, it is easy to see how the procedure would be a valuable tool for psychoanalysts. Yet, Freud was quick to acknowledge some drawbacks. Chief among these is that not all clients are responsive to hypnotic suggestion. Moreover, as we will see in Chapter 4, not all psychologists agree with Freud's description of hypnosis as a pathway to the unconscious.

Accidents

Suppose you are having an argument with a friend and you "accidentally" knock off a shelf an irreplaceable statue belonging to that friend. The statue shatters beyond repair. You apologize, saying that you did not mean to do it. But is this really an accident? In Freud's view, many apparent accidents are in fact intentional actions stemming from unconscious impulses. Freud might argue that you were expressing an unconscious desire to hurt your friend when you broke his or her prized possession. Clients who claim to accidentally forget their regular therapy appointment might be displaying what Freud called *resistance*. Consciously, the clients believe they simply did not remember the appointment. Unconsciously, there has been a deliberate effort to thwart a therapist who may be close to uncovering threatening unconscious material. Similarly, reckless drivers might be setting themselves up for an accident to satisfy an unconscious desire for self-inflicted harm. To Freudian psychologists, many unfortunate events are accidents in the sense that people do not consciously intend them, but not in the sense that they are unintended.

Symbolic Behavior

Just like the objects we dream, many of our daily behaviors can be interpreted by Freudian psychologists as symbolic representations of unconscious desires. Symbolic actions pose no threat to the ego because they are not perceived for what they are. An excellent example is found in the case of a client who held a great deal of hostility toward his mother, although he would not consciously acknowledge these feelings. To the therapist, the unconscious hostility was expressed through an interesting doormat the client purchased for his home. The doormat was decorated with images of daisies. Not coincidentally, the client's mother had a favorite flower, the daisy. She had daisies on her dishes and pictures of daisies all around the house. In short, the daisies symbolized the mother. The good son enjoyed rubbing his feet and stomping on the daisies—symbolically acting out his hostility toward his mother—every time he entered the house.

When we apply Freud's dream symbols to everyday acts, we can see psychologically significant behavior seemingly everywhere. What can we say about the woman who joins the rifle team? The man who explores caves? The person who constantly borrows