

Another necessary step in traditional psychoanalysis is the development of *transference*. Here emotions associated with people from the past are displaced onto the therapist. For example, a client might talk to and act toward the therapist as if the therapist were a deceased parent. Unconscious emotions and previously undelivered speeches buried long ago are unleashed, feelings that often lie at the heart of the client's disorder. Freud warned that handling transference was a delicate and crucial part of the therapy process. He also cautioned therapists against *countertransference*, in which therapists displace their own feelings toward other individuals onto the client.

From the outset, psychoanalysis has been controversial, and the debate about its effectiveness has never ended (Gabbard, Gunderson, & Fonagy, 2002). Nonetheless, a large number of practicing psychotherapists identify their approach as “psychoanalytic” (Cook, Biyanova, Elhai, Schnurr, & Coyne, 2010; Thoma & Cecero, 2009). Recent reviews of carefully designed studies find evidence that psychoanalytic therapies are often effective when treating a wide variety of psychological disorders (Leichsenring, 2007; Leichsenring & Rabung, 2008; Shedler, 2010). However, these claims of effectiveness have been met with skepticism (Beck & Bhar, 2009; McKay, 2011; Roepke & Renneberg, 2009). Critics also argue that psychoanalysis, if it works, can often take years and therefore is not as cost-effective as many short-term therapies. It is probably safe to say that, like most things associated with Freud, the controversies surrounding psychoanalysis are likely to continue.

Assessment: Projective Tests

Psychoanalysts are faced with a unique problem when developing ways to measure the personality constructs of interest to them. By definition, the most important concepts are those the test taker is unable to report directly. So how do psychoanalytic therapists and researchers measure unconscious material? The solution is to bypass direct reports altogether.

Projective tests present individuals with ambiguous stimuli, such as inkblots or vague pictures. Test takers respond by describing what they see, telling stories about the pictures, or somehow reacting to the material. The tests provide no clues about correct or incorrect answers, which makes each person's responses highly idiosyncratic. One person may see a circus and an elephant, whereas another identifies a cemetery and a woman in mourning. As the name implies, psychoanalysts consider these responses projections from the unconscious. The ambiguous material gives test takers an opportunity to express pent-up impulses. However, as with other expressions of unconscious impulses, the significance of the response is not apparent to the test taker.

Some Popular Projective Tests

In 1921, Hermann Rorschach published a paper in which he described a procedure involving inkblots that he used in his work with schizophrenics. Although Rorschach died the next year at age 38, his work stimulated other psychologists who continued to develop the test that still bears its creator's name. The *Rorschach inkblot test* consists of 10 cards, each containing nothing more than a blot of ink, sometimes in more than one color. Test takers are instructed to describe what they see in the images. They are



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This psychologist is administering one of the most widely used personality tests: the Rorschach inkblot test. The participant tells him what she sees on her card; whether these responses provide a valid assessment of her personality remains a controversy.

free to use any part of the inkblot and are usually allowed to give several responses to each card. Although some of the cards may be quite suggestive, they are in fact nothing more than inkblots.

Inkblot test responses can be analyzed with any of several scoring systems developed over the years. However, most psychologists probably rely on their personal insights and intuition when interpreting responses. Unusual answers and recurring themes are of particular interest, especially if they are consistent with information revealed during therapy sessions. For example, most therapists would probably take note if a client sees dead bodies, graves, and tombstones in the ambiguous images. Similarly, clients who see suicidal acts, bizarre sexual behavior, or violent images probably provide therapists with topics to explore in future sessions.

The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) is another widely used projective test. The TAT was designed by Henry Murray (Chapter 7) and consists of a series of ambiguous pictures. Test takers are asked to tell a story about each picture—who the people are, what is going on, what has led up to the scene, and what the outcome is going to be. Although most of the pictures contain images of people, facial expressions and the nature of the relationship between the people are intentionally vague. Thus, test takers may see love, guilt, anger, or grief in the faces. The characters may be fighting, plotting, loving, or unaware of each other. They may be in for a happy, sad, horrifying, or disappointing end to their situation. Although therapists often rely

on their intuition when interpreting test responses, many use relatively objective scoring procedures. Examples of how psychologists use these procedures in research are presented in Chapters 4 and 8.

Yet another projective test used by many therapists is the *Human Figure Drawing test*. Although initially developed in the 1920s as a measure of intelligence, psychologists soon recognized that the test also could be used to measure important personality constructs (Handler, 1996). The ambiguous stimulus in this test consists of a blank piece of paper and instructions to draw a picture for the psychologist. In many cases, test takers are simply asked to draw a person, but sometimes psychologists instruct them to draw a family or a tree. Although it has been used in many ways, most often the Human Figure Drawing test is seen as an indicator of psychological problems, particularly in children (Bardos & Powell, 2001; Matto, 2002).

The notion that children's drawings provide a peephole into their inner thoughts and feelings has strong intuitive appeal. Schoolteachers often take note of children who never seem to draw smiles on the faces of the characters they sketch. Similarly, children who frequently draw monsters or ghoulish creatures could be expressing some disturbing inward feelings. A glance at the drawings by emotionally disturbed children presented in Figure 3.2 makes a persuasive case that children sometimes express through drawing what they otherwise might not put into words.

Evaluation of Projective Tests

Hundreds of studies have been conducted with projective tests, most often with the Rorschach inkblot test. Responses to the inkblots have been used to predict everything from intelligence to sexual orientation. Unfortunately, psychologists disagree on how to interpret most of this research (Garb, Wood, Lilienfeld, & Nezworski, 2005). Critics point to unacceptably low indices of reliability and frequent failures to find evidence for the validity of the test (Wood et al., 2010; Wood, Nezworski, & Stejskal, 1996, 1997). One team of reviewers concluded that “there is currently no scientific basis for justifying the use of Rorschach scales in psychological assessment” (Hunsley & Bailey, 1999, p. 266). Another said bluntly that the Rorschach inkblot test was “not a valid test of anything” (Dawes, 1994, p. 146). Some psychologists challenge whether the inkblot procedure should be described as a test at all. They argue that the Rorschach inkblot test is more accurately characterized as a highly structured interview.

But there are two sides to every controversy, and advocates for the Rorschach test raise several important points in its defense. First, one needs to separate good studies designed to test appropriate predictions from poor studies that attempt to tie test responses to any and all behaviors (Weiner, 1995, 1996). When reviewers look at results from sound studies making reasonable predictions, they find evidence for the test's usefulness (Choca, 2013; Gronnerod, 2004; Mihura, Meyer, Dumitrascu, & Bombel, 2013; Parker, Hanson, & Hunsley, 1988; Viglione, 1999). Moreover, newer, more rigorous systems for coding Rorschach responses have proved far more reliable than earlier methods (Viglione & Hilsenroth, 2001; Weiner, 2001). Second, establishing good validity data for projective tests is more difficult than when using other kinds of personality measures. If a therapist concludes from an inkblot test that a client has



Figure 3.2 Human Figure Drawings by Emotionally Disturbed Children

Source: From Koppitz, E. M. (1968). *Psychological Evaluation of Children's Human Figure Drawing*. Reprinted by permission of Grune & Stratton, Inc., and the author.

a certain unconscious conflict, what objective evidence of that conflict can the therapist provide to establish the validity of this claim? A therapist could make any claim about unconscious material, and we would have no way to know whether the therapist is correct. Indeed, if objective indicators of unconscious thoughts existed, therapists wouldn't need to use projective tests in the first place.

Despite the controversy, the Rorschach and many other projective tests continue to be widely used (Wright, 2017). And this use extends far beyond psychotherapy. For example, projective tests are often used by school psychologists to evaluate social and emotional adjustment in children (Hojnoski, Morrison, Brown, & Matthews, 2009) and by psychologists working with law enforcement and court officials (Gacono & Evans, 2008). One reason for this popularity is that the tests may uncover information not easily obtained through other procedures. For example, therapists working with children sometimes allow a child to play with a family of dolls. Imagine a child who

acts out a drama in which the mother and father dolls are cruel to the child doll. The child might be revealing something about the situation at home that he or she cannot easily express through other means.

Then again, many psychologists warn against overinterpreting responses to projective tests. The child in the previous example could merely be acting out a scene from a recent television program. Because the validity of projective tests remains open to challenge, psychologists usually are advised not to rely heavily on the tests when making diagnoses (Wood, Garb, Lilienfeld, & Nezworski, 2002). Instead, projective test results should be viewed as but one source of information about a client. They should be taken into consideration along with information collected through interviews, observations, case histories, and other psychological tests.

Strengths and Criticisms of Freud's Theory

None of the approaches to personality covered in this book can spark an argument as quickly as Freudian theory. Every clinical psychologist and personality researcher has an opinion about the value and accuracy of Freud's ideas. Although few accept all of Freud's observations and postulates unquestioningly, adherents of the Freudian view strongly defend the basic assumptions Freud made about the nature of human functioning. Critics tend to be equally passionate in their evaluations.

Strengths

"Freud's greatest achievement probably consisted in taking neurotic patients seriously."

Carl Jung

Even if all of Freud's ideas were to be rejected by modern personality theorists, he would still deserve an important place in the history of psychology. Freud's was the first comprehensive theory of human behavior and personality. Most subsequent personality theorists have found it necessary to point out where their theories differ from or correct weaknesses in Freud's works. Many of these psychologists built their theories on the foundation laid by Freud, borrowing key psychoanalytic concepts and assumptions. As discussed in Chapter 5, many of those who studied with Freud or were trained in the Freudian tradition went on to develop and promote their own versions of psychoanalytic theory. In short, Freud's observations set the direction for subsequent personality theory and research. Even recent approaches to personality, although far removed from psychoanalytic theory, are probably influenced in many ways by Freud's ideas.

Freud also can be credited with developing the first system of psychotherapy. Today, treating psychological disorders through discussions with a therapist is an accepted and widely practiced procedure. Although psychotherapy might have evolved without Freud, it certainly would not have evolved the way it did. Techniques such as free association, hypnosis, and dream interpretation have become standard tools for many therapists. Indeed, some clients are disappointed to find that their therapist has no couch and does not plan to hypnotize them or interpret their dreams. Nonetheless, surveys reveal that a large number of young as well as experienced psychotherapists identify their perspective as "psychoanalytic."

In addition, Freud can be credited with popularizing and promoting many important psychological concepts. As discussed in Chapters 4, 6, and 16, many of the topics researched by psychologists today have their roots in one or more of Freud's concepts,