

# THEORIES OF PERSONALITY

## II

Psychodynamic and Neo-Freudian Theories

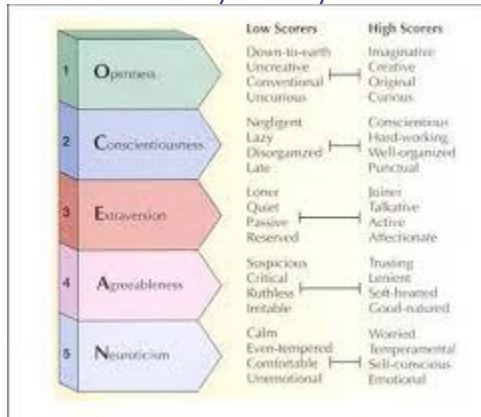
1/1/2014

SESSION 5

PSYCHODYNAMIC AND NEO-FREURDIAN THEORIES

# THEORIES OF PERSONALITY II

## SESSION 5: Psychodynamic and Neo-Freudian Theories



### Dissent in the Ranks

While [Sigmund Freud](#) is considered the father of psychoanalysis, and by many, the father of modern personality theory, he was also very strict and stubborn about his beliefs. As a respected scholar, he developed a following of well known theorists and psychologists in his psychoanalytic society. But as theories were discussed, questioned, and revamped, many found themselves at odds with the father in their views for the society and the theories.

As these members began to break from the Freudian camp, many new theories emerged that have become well received in their own right. These new theories, however, hold many of the same underlying beliefs of psychoanalysis, most importantly the view of the unconscious as an important drive in human emotions, cognitions, and behaviors. The idea of defense mechanisms related to the unconscious have also been maintained in many of these new theories as well as the importance of early development of the formation of the personality.

As such, these new theories, arising from psychoanalytic thought and the writings of Freud, still maintain many Freudian components. The term Neo-Freudian or Psychodynamic have both been used to describe those who left the psychoanalytic society and formed their own schools of thought.

In this chapter we will discuss some of the more important neo-Freudian theorists and theories. Like Freud, you will likely see marked similarities between the

theory and the life of the theorist. It is important to ask yourself if this resemblance is a mere bias or an ingenious insight.

Among those we will discuss are Alfred Adler and what he called Individual Psychology, Carl Jung's Individual Psychology, Erik and Erikson's Ego Psychology. We will also talk briefly about Karen Horney, Harry Stack Sullivan and Erik Fromm. Main disagreements revolved around (1) the negativity of Freud's theories, (2) his belief that most, if not all of the adult personality is shaped by early childhood experiences, and (3) his failure to incorporate social and cultural influences.

### **The First to Leave**

Alfred Adler joined Freud's analytic society in 1902 and was even named the first president in 1910. However, after growing disagreements he left with several other theorists in 1911, starting his own group originally named the 'Society for Free Psychoanalytic Research.' It is suspected that this name was meant as an attack on Freud's stubbornness to accepting disagreements and challenge to his theories. The name was later changed to 'Individual Psychology,' perhaps as a means to differentiate Adler as an independent theorist in his search for overcoming his perceived inferiority.

### **Inferiority**

According to Adler's theory, each of us is born into the world with a sense of inferiority. We start as a weak and helpless child and strive to overcome these deficiencies by become superior to those around us. He called this struggle a *striving for superiority*, and like Freud's Eros and Thanatos, he saw this as the driving force behind all human thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

For those of us who strive to be accomplished writers, powerful business people, or influential politicians, it is because of our feelings of inferiority and a strong need to over come this negative part of us according to Adler. This excessive feeling of inferiority can also have the opposite effect. As it becomes overwhelming and without the needed successes, we can develop an inferiority

complex. This belief leaves us with feeling incredibly less important and deserving than others, helpless, hopeless, and unmotivated to strive for the superiority that would make us complete.

## **Parenting and Birth Order**

Parenting Styles. Adler did agree with Freud on some major issues relating to the parenting of children and the long term effects of improper or inefficient child rearing. He identified two parental styles that he argued will cause almost certain problems in adulthood. The first was pampering, referring to a parent overprotecting a child, giving him too much attention, and sheltering him from the negative realities of life. As this child grows older, he will be ill equipped to deal with these realities, may doubt his own abilities or decision making skills, and may seek out others to replace the safety he once enjoyed as a child.

On the other extreme is what Adler called neglect. A neglected child is one who is not protected at all from the world and is forced to face life's struggles alone. This child may grow up to fear the world, have a strong sense of mistrust for others and she may have a difficult time forming intimate relationships.

The best approach, according to this theory, is to protect children from the evils of the world but not shelter them from it. In more practical terms, it means allowing them to hear or see the negative aspects of the world while still feeling the safety of parental influence. In other words, don't immediately go to the school principal if your child is getting bullied, but rather teach your child how to respond or take care of herself at school.

Birth Order. Simply put, Adler believed that the order in which you are born to a family inherently effects your personality. First born children who later have younger siblings may have it the worst. These children are given excessive attention and pampering by their parents until that fateful day when the little brother or sister arrives. Suddenly they are no longer the center of attention and fall into the shadows wondering why everything changed. According to Adler, they are left feeling inferior, questioning their importance in the family, and trying desperately to gain back the attention they suddenly lost. The birth order

theory holds that first born children often have the greatest number of problems as they get older.

Middle born children may have it the easiest, and interestingly, Adler was a middle born child. These children are not pampered as their older sibling was, but are still afforded the attention. As a middle child, they have the luxury of trying to dethrone the oldest child and become more superior while at the same time knowing that they hold this same power over their younger siblings. Adler believed that middle children have a high need for superiority and are often able to seek it out such as through healthy competition.

The youngest children, like the first born, may be more likely to experience personality problems later in life. This is the child who grows up knowing that he has the least amount of power in the whole family. He sees his older siblings having more freedom and more superiority. He also gets pampered and protected more than any other child did. This could leave him with a sense that he can not take on the world alone and will always be inferior to others.

## **A Disappointing Break**

[Carl Jung's](#) break from Freud's Psychoanalytic Society was perhaps the most disappointing for Freud. When they met it is reported that they spent over 12 hours discussing psychoanalytic theory, and soon after, Jung became the logical successor to the society. Although he served as the society's first president, he resigned from the organization in 1914 after intense disagreements with his mentor.

The main disagreement he had with Freud was his belief that there was more to the unconscious than Freud theorized. Jung believed that there were fears, behaviors, and thoughts that children and adults exhibit that are remarkably similar across time and culture. He believed that this was more than coincidence and represented what he called the *collective unconscious*.

His newly formed school of thought, Analytic Psychology, theorized about how this collective unconscious influences personality. He argued that it was made up of what he termed *archetypes* which are *primordial images* inherited from

our ancestors. As support for such a theory, he spoke of the immediate attachment infants have for their mother, the inevitable fear of the dark seen in young children, and how images such as the sun, moon, wise old man, angels, and evil all seem to be predominate themes throughout history.

In his view, infants are drawn to their mother because of the unconscious image of mother that is alive in all of us and that we fear the dark because of the unconscious image of darkness. Although he described many archetypes in his writings, there are a few that have received a lot of attention and thought. These include the animus/anima, the shadow, and the self.

The animus is the masculine side of the female and the anima is the feminine side of the male. This expands on Freud's writings that we are all born bisexual and develop normal sexual attraction through our psychosexual development. According to Jung, we all have an unconscious opposite gender hidden within us and the role of this archetype is to guide us toward the perfect mate. In other words, we project our animus/anima onto others as they project theirs onto us. When a match is made, we have found a suitable partner.

Another archetype is called the shadow which is basically the unconscious negative or dark side of our personality. The shadow, like all other archetypes, is passed down through history and given different names depending on time and culture. In Judeo-Christian writings, according to Jung, the shadow archetype is called the Devil.

Finally, the self archetype is the unifying part of all of us that finds balance in our lives. Working with the ego (which is partly in our personal unconscious), it helps us manage the other archetypes and helps us feel complete.

While his writings are poetic at times and nearly impossible to follow at others, the remarkable way his theories blend with myths, folklore, and legends has kept his theories alive. Are his archetypes nothing more than naturally born instincts or are they an unconscious representation of our long dead ancestors? Many argue that Jung has pieced together an important, and previously missing, explanation of these personality aspects that we all share.

## **A Different Beginning**

[Erik Erikson](#) wasn't trained by Sigmund Freud, nor did he hold a Doctorate at a highly respected university. In fact, he was not formally educated like the vast majority of his psychodynamic colleagues. Although his parents pushed for medical school, Erikson saw himself as an artist and spent his youth wandering through Europe living the artist's life. In 1927, he took a job working with children of Freud's patients and friends. The school approached development psychoanalytically and Erikson was soon to master this theory and begin developing his own theories relating to personality development. His two major contributions to psychodynamic thought include a reappraisal of the ego and an extended view of developmental stages.

## **The New Ego**

Erik Erikson believed that the ego Freud described was far more than just a mediator between the superego and the id. He saw the ego as a positive driving force in human development and personality. As such, he believed the ego's main job was to establish and maintain a sense of identity. A person with a strong sense of identity is one who knows where he is in life, has accepted this position and has workable goals for change and growth. He has a sense of uniqueness while also having a sense of belonging and wholeness.

Those who have weaker egos, encounter trying times, or who have poorly developed egos get trapped in what is termed an identity crisis. According to Erikson, an identity crisis is a time in a person's life when they lack direction, feel unproductive, and do not feel a strong sense of identity. He believed that we all have identity crises at one time or another in our lives and that these crises do not necessarily represent a negative but can be a driving force toward positive resolution.

## **Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development**

Like Freud and many others, Erik Erikson maintained that personality develops in a predetermined order. Instead of focusing on sexual development, however, he was interested in how children socialize and how this affects their sense of

self. He saw personality as developing throughout the lifetime and looked at identity crises at the focal point for each stage of human development.

Erikson's *Theory of Psychosocial Development* has eight distinct stage, each with two possible outcomes. According to the theory, successful completion of each stage results in a healthy personality and successful interactions with others. Failure to successfully complete a stage can result in a reduced ability to complete further stages and therefore a more unhealthy personality and sense of self. These stages, however, can be resolved successfully at a later time.

**Trust Versus Mistrust.** From ages birth to one year, children begin to learn the ability to trust others based upon the consistency of their caregiver(s). If trust develops successfully, the child gains confidence and security in the world around him and is able to feel secure even when threatened. Unsuccessful completion of this stage can result in an inability to trust, and therefore an sense of fear about the inconsistent world. It may result in anxiety, heightened insecurities, and an over feeling of mistrust in the world around them.

**Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt.** Between the ages of one and three, children begin to assert their independence, by walking away from their mother, picking which toy to play with, and making choices about what they like to wear, to eat, etc. If children in this stage are encouraged and supported in their increased independence, they become more confident and secure in their own ability to survive in the world. If children are criticized, overly controlled, or not given the opportunity to assert themselves, they begin to feel inadequate in their ability to survive, and may then become overly dependent upon others, lack self-esteem, and feel a sense of shame or doubt in their own abilities.

**Initiative vs. Guilt.** Around age three and continuing to age six, children assert themselves more frequently. They begin to plan activities, make up games, and initiate activities with others. If given this opportunity, children develop a sense of initiative, and feel secure in their ability to lead others and make decisions. Conversely, if this tendency is squelched, either through criticism or control, children develop a sense of guilt. They may feel like a nuisance to others and will therefore remain followers, lacking in self-initiative.



**Industry vs. Inferiority.** From age six years to puberty, children begin to develop a sense of pride in their accomplishments. They initiate projects, see them through to completion, and feel good about what they have achieved. During this time, teachers play an increased role in the child's development. If children are encouraged and reinforced for their initiative, they begin to feel industrious and feel confident in their ability to achieve goals. If this initiative is not encouraged, if it is restricted by parents or teacher, then the child begins to feel inferior, doubting his own abilities and therefore may not reach his potential.

**Identity vs. Role Confusion.** During adolescence, the transition from childhood to adulthood is most important. Children are becoming more independent, and begin to look at the future in terms of career, relationships, families, housing, etc. During this period, they explore possibilities and begin to form their own identity based upon the outcome of their explorations. This sense of who they are can be hindered, which results in a sense of confusion ("I don't know what I want to be when I grow up") about themselves and their role in the world.

**Intimacy vs. Isolation.** Occurring in Young adulthood, we begin to share ourselves more intimately with others. We explore relationships leading toward longer term commitments with someone other than a family member. Successful completion can lead to comfortable relationships and a sense of commitment, safety, and care within a relationship. Avoiding intimacy, fearing commitment and relationships can lead to isolation, loneliness, and sometimes depression.

**Generativity vs. Stagnation.** During middle adulthood, we establish our careers, settle down within a relationship, begin our own families and develop a sense of being a part of the bigger picture. We give back to society through raising our children, being productive at work, and becoming involved in community activities and organizations. By failing to achieve these objectives, we become stagnant and feel unproductive.

**Ego Integrity vs. Despair.** As we grow older and become senior citizens, we tend to slow down our productivity, and explore life as a retired person. It is during this time that we contemplate our accomplishments and are able to develop integrity if we see ourselves as leading a successful life. If we see our lives as unproductive, feel guilt about our pasts, or feel that we did not accomplish our

life goals, we become dissatisfied with life and develop despair, often leading to depression and hopelessness.

### **Ahead of her Time**

### **Feminine Psychology**

Perhaps the most important contribution Karen Horney made to psychodynamic thought was her disagreements with Freud's view of women. Horney was never a student of Freud, but did study his work and eventually taught psychoanalysis at both the Berlin and New York Psychoanalytic Institute. After her insistence that Freud's view of the inherent difference between males and females, she agreed to leave the institute and form her own school known as the American Institute for Psychoanalysis.

In many ways, Horney was well ahead of her time and although she died before the feminist movement took hold, she was perhaps the theorist who changed the way psychology looked at gender differences. She countered Freud's concept of penis envy with what she called womb envy, or man's envy of woman's ability to bear children. She argued that men compensate for this inability by striving for achievement and success in other realms.

She also disagreed with Freud's belief that males and females were born with inherent differences in their personality. Rather than citing biological differences, she argued for a societal and cultural explanation. In her view, men and women were equal outside of the cultural restrictions often placed on being female. These views, while not well accepted at the time, were used years after her death to help promote gender equality.

### **Neurosis and Relationships**

Horney was also known for her study of neurotic personality. She defined neurosis as a maladaptive and counterproductive way of dealing with relationships. These people are unhappy and desperately seek out relationships in order to feel good about themselves. Their way of securing these relationships

include projections of their own insecurity and neediness which eventually drives others away.

Most of us have come in contact with people who seem to successfully irritate or frighten people away with their clinginess, significant lack of self esteem, and even anger and threatening behavior. According to Horney, these individuals adapted this personality style through a childhood filled with anxiety. And while this way of dealing with others may have been beneficial in their youth, as adults it serves to almost guarantee their needs will not be met.

She identified three ways of dealing with the world that are formed by an upbringing in a neurotic family: Moving Toward People, Moving Against People, and Moving Away From People.

**Moving Toward People.** Some children who feel a great deal of anxiety and helplessness move toward people in order to seek help and acceptance. They are striving to feel worthy and can believe the only way to gain this is through the acceptance of others. These people have an intense need to be liked, involved, important, and appreciated. So much so, that they will often fall in love quickly or feel an artificial but very strong attachment to people they may not know well. Their attempts to make that person love them creates a clinginess and neediness that much more often than not results in the other person leaving the relationship.

**Moving Against People.** Another way to deal with insecurities and anxiety is to try to force your power onto others in hopes of feeling good about yourself. Those with this personality style come across as bossy, demanding, selfish, and even cruel. Horney argued that these people project their own hostilities (which she called externalization) onto others and therefore use this as a justification to 'get them before they get me.' Once again, relationships appear doomed from the beginning.

**Moving Away From People.** The final possible consequence of a neurotic household is a personality style filled with asocial behavior and an almost indifference to others. If they don't get involved with others, they can't be hurt by them. While it protects them from emotional pain of relationships, it also

keeps away all positive aspects of relationships. It leaves them feeling alone and empty.



## **Political Psychophosopher**

Erich Fromm was born in Germany in 1900. He grew up a Jew in a country full of anti-Semitism. He witnessed World War I when he was an early teen and the rise of the Nazi party fifteen years later. His interest in war and politics grew from these experiences and much of his theories were derived as a result of his desire to understand why individuals followed leaders into acts of destruction.

His initial book, and likely his most influential work, was called Escape From Freedom, published near the beginning of World War II. In it he described freedom as the greatest problem for most individuals. With freedom, according to Fromm, comes an overwhelming sense of aloneness and an inability to exert individual power. He argued that we use several different techniques to alleviate the anxiety associated with our perception of freedom, including automaton, conformity, authoritarianism, destructiveness, and individuation.

The most common of these is **automaton conformity**. Fromm argued that with the anxiety associated with our inability to express power and our fear of aloneness, we conform ourselves to a larger society. By acting like everyone else, holding the same values, purchasing the same products, and believing in the same morals, we gain a sense of power. This power of the masses assists us in not feeling alone and helpless. Unfortunately, according to Fromm, it also removes our individuality and prevents us from truly being ourselves.

**Authoritarianism** is a technique that others use to ward off the anxiety. Following an entity outside of the self and perceived greater than the self is the main feature of authoritarianism. As the individual feels alone and powerless, he gains strength from the belief that there is a greater power beyond himself. This entity could be a religious figure, a political leader, or social belief. By giving up power to the powerful, we become the powerful and no longer feel alone. In this sense authoritarianism is two sided or what

Fromm describes as sadism/masochism, where we submit to our leader (such as Adolph Hitler) and demand power over our perceived enemies (Jews).

Others use the technique Fromm called **destructiveness**, which refers to an attempt to destroy those we perceive as having the power. Because of our desire for power, we may feel that this finite resource must be taken from those who possess it. There are many ways to attempt this destruction, including the alignment with hate groups, religious extremism, or even patriotism. While our actions are often antisocial, cruel, and misguided, we rationalize them by claiming a sense of duty, a god given order, or the love of country.

Fromm believed that all three of these techniques used to overcome our anxiety associated with freedom are unhealthy. The only healthy technique is to embrace this freedom and express our true selves rather than what we perceive as giving us power. He argued that true power comes from individuality and freedom and doing what you want to do rather than what you are suppose to do is the only way to achieve **individuation**; the ability to be yourself and embrace the power associated with true freedom.