The Neo-Freudians

Even today, Freud's basic ideas regarding the Id, Ego and SuperEgo, the importance of the unconscious, the shaping of personality in childhood and the defense mechanisms are still widely accepted and respected. However, many psychologists have disagreed with other aspects of Freud's work.

The first critic of Freud's work came from a former colleague and friend of Freud, Carl Jung (pronounced "young"). Jung was the first of the "Neo-Freudians", a group of psychiatrists who didn't particularly agree with Freud's negative view of the "...human condition", and his emphasis on the importance of sexual impulses. Jung, and others felt that social relationships and positive impulses were balanced with the seemingly negative impulses that Freud believe inspired personality. It was Jung that believed that humans have both good and evil intentions and that in healthy individuals these two opposites were in balance.

Other Neo-Freudians such as Alfred Adler and Karen Horney expanded Jung's ideas of the importance of social relationships. They believed that with regards to childhood development, it is the social, not sexual tensions that are important in one's personality. Adler at first, following Freud's ideas, felt that a child's personality was determined by their feelings of inferiority. Adler then came to believe that everyone is born with a social interest and that it is the ability of the individual to express that social interest that determines their personality.

Karen Horney was another opponent of Freud's ideas, particularly with regards to Freud's sexist views of sexuality. It was Karen Horney that promoted the idea of the importance of a caring, nurturing environment for children. Horney felt that conflicts within a person's psyche were the result of poor child-rearing. Working on the ideas of Jung that in each individual there exists both good and bad, she felt that if a child feels loved and secure, then that child will grow up to be a secure, healthy individual who's positive aspects of their personality will dominate. However, if a child loses faith in a parent's love, due to harshness, violence or even overprotection, then that child may grow up to be an insecure person who is unable to develop their own loving and trusting relationships, or maybe even develop more severe anti-social behaviors.

Today, most psychologists continue to build on the ideas of both Freud and the Neo-Freudians and tend to agree that both their genetic (nature) and their environment (nurture) will determine a person's personality. In this sense, we now realize how important those early developmental years are for a child.
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Directions: READ the excerpt on the Neo-Freudians from Psychology - An Introduction by Ben B. Lahey, and the handout Freud's "Descendants and Dissenters" from Psychology by David G. Myers, and then answer the following questions.

1. Define the following terms:
   - feelings of inferiority
   - social interest
   - extroversion
   - introversion
   - personal unconscious

2. Answer the following questions using COMPLETE SENTENCES.
   a. In your own words, explain the differences in how Freud viewed the human condition and how Carl Jung viewed the human condition. (5 marks for quality of thought and evidence of effort)

   b. In your own words, describe how Karen Horney viewed anxiety in the development of a child's personality (how and why do children develop anxiety). (4 marks for quality of thought)

   c. In your own words, describe how Karen Horney, a self-proclaimed "Freudian", differed from Freud? (5 marks for evidence of thought and effort)

3. Use the internet to find an article about Carl Jung, Alfred Adler or Karen Horney. Print out that article and briefly describe what it is about and mention something you learned about that person from that article.

   You will receive 2 marks for finding the article and 4 marks for describing something that you learned from it, for a total of 6 marks.

   Total: ____ / 25
Although Freud was known to change his mind, he was deeply committed to his ideas and principles, even in the face of harsh criticism. Although controversial, his writings soon attracted followers, mostly young, ambitious physicians who formed an inner circle around their strong-minded leader. From time to time sparks flew, and one member or another would leave or be outcast. Even the ideas of the outcasts however, reflected Freud’s influence.

These pioneering psychoanalysts and others, whom we now call “neo-Freudians,” accepted Freud’s basic ideas: the personality structures of the id, ego, and the superego; the importance of the unconscious; the shaping of personality in childhood; and the dynamics of anxiety and the defense mechanism. But they differed with Freud in two important ways. First, they placed more emphasis on the role of the conscious mind in interpreting experience and coping with the environment. What’s more, they doubted that sex and aggression were all-consuming motivations. Instead, they placed more emphasis on loftier motives and on social interaction, as the following examples illustrate.

Alfred Adler and Karen Horney agreed with Freud that childhood is important. But they believed that childhood social, not sexual, tensions are crucial for personality formation. Adler, who himself struggled to overcome childhood illnesses and accidents, said that much of our behaviour is driven by an effort to conquer childhood feelings of inferiority, feelings that trigger strivings for superiority and power. (It was Adler who proposed the still-popular idea of the “inferiority complex”.) Horney said that childhood anxiety, caused by the dependent child’s sense of helplessness, triggers the desire for love and security. In countering Freud’s assumptions that women have weak superegos and suffer “penis envy”, Horney sought to balance the bias she detected in this masculine view of psychology.

Erich Fromm and other “ego psychologists” agreed with Freud that the ego is important. But in deemphasizing sexual and aggressive impulses, they viewed the ego as more than a mediator between id and superego. The ego, they said, strives for unity and love, for truth and freedom; such conscious strivings are not merely a sublimation of baser motives.

Erik Erikson agreed with Freud that development proceeds through a series of critical stages. But he believed these are psychosocial, not psychosexual, stages. Erickson also argued that life’s developmental stages encompass the whole life span. He maintained that infancy is a time for establishing basic trust, adolescence for establishing an identity. In adulthood, he contended, people strive first for intimacy with an another; then for
generatively (a feeling of productivity through family and work); and finally for integrity (a sense that their lives have been meaningful).

Unlike these other neo-Freudians, 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, the unconscious contains more than a person's repressed thoughts and feelings. There is also a collective unconscious, he believed, a common reservoir of images derived from our early ancestors' universal experiences. Jung said that the collective unconscious explains why, for many people, spiritual concerns are deep-rooted and why people in different cultures share certain myths and images, such as that of mother as the symbol of nurturance.

The Neo-Freudians
An excerpt from Psychology – An Introduction by Ben Lahey

Psychoanalytic thinking continues to be important in contemporary psychology, although mostly through revised versions of Freud's theory of personality. Some modern psychologists adhere to an orthodox version of psychoanalysis, but far more endorse somewhat newer versions that grew out of Freudian thinking but differ on several major points. These revisions of psychoanalysis each differ from one another in some ways, but they share the common view that Freud placed too much emphasis on unconscious sexual motivation and aggression, gave too little importance to positive aspects of personality, and underemphasized the importance of adequate social relationships.

The revisions of Freud's thinking began in a storm that took place during his own lifetime. As Freud's fame spread throughout Europe, he developed a group of followers. But when two of these followers, Carl Jung and Alfred Adler, disagreed with Freud on the issue of sexual motivation, they were angrily dismissed from the loyal fold. Freud was an authoritarian individual who tolerated little disagreement from others.

Carl Jung

Carl Jung was a physician who had just begun his career working in a psychiatric hospital in Switzerland when he read Freud's most influential early work, The Interpretation of Dreams. He began to correspond with Freud and travel to Vienna for meetings. As Jung and Freud became friends, Jung joined the inner circle of Freud's disciples as an influential member. Jung published a number of works that used Freud's ideas to explain aspects of severe mental illness, but gradually Jung came to question Freud's emphasis on sexual motivation. Within 7 years of their first meeting, these differences in opinion led to a severing of their personal and professional relationship.
Jung felt that Freud took a one-sided negative view of the human condition. While Jung thought that the unconscious mind did contain selfish and hostile forces, he believed that it also contained positive, even spiritual, motives. In fact, a fundamental characteristic of the human mind to Jung was that all important elements came in the form of opposites. We possess the potential to be both good and evil, masculine and feminine, mother and father.

One of Jung’s most original and lasting contributions to the understanding of personality is the pair of opposite personality traits known as extroversion and introversion. Each of us possesses a desire to be friendly, open to the things happening in the world, and concerned about others (extroversion); but each of us also possesses a tendency to focus our attention on ourselves, to be shy, and to meet our own needs (introversion). As with all of the polar opposites, Jung felt that it was important to allow a balance of these two opposing tendencies. We should not be too much of an introvert or too much of an extrovert.

Jung also modified Freud’s view of the unconscious. He felt that we each possess both a personal unconscious and a collective unconscious. The personal unconscious contains those motives, conflicts, and information that we have repressed into unconsciousness because they are threatening to us. The collective unconscious is the unconscious mind with which all humans are born. He used the term collective to emphasize that its contents are the same for all humans. Much of his later career was devoted to blending his interest in psychology with his childhood interest in cultures from the past. He assembled many sorts of evidence to suggest that every culture expresses the same sorts of unconscious motives in very much the same symbolic ways. For example, the sexual symbol the phallus (the penis) has appeared in many cultures throughout history in the form of totem poles, scepters held by kings to symbolize authority, and structures such as the Washington Monument and the CN Tower in Toronto.

Alfred Adler

Alfred Adler was a young physician practicing medicine in Vienna when he was invited to join the Vienna Psychoanalytic Association. He soon became a favourite of Freud and was asked to be the second president of the society succeeding Freud himself. In time, however, the two argued over the publication policies of the association’s journal and parted company. Differences between the psychological views of the two men had already become apparent, but they became increasingly obvious after the personal dispute.

Adler agreed with Freud that the struggle to come to grips with one’s sexual and hostile impulses was important to the development of personality, but he did not feel it was the most important factor. In his early career, Adler felt that the primary struggle in a personality development was the effort to overcome feelings of inferiority in social
relationships and to develop feelings of superiority. At first, he limited this view to individuals who were born with physical defects, as was Adler himself, but later he expanded this view to include physically normal individuals as well. Because we are all small and dependent on the protection of adults as children, we begin life with feelings of inferiority. The task of personality development, according to Adler, is to outgrow the inferiority of childhood and see ourselves as competent adults. Adler felt that the role of parents and other caretakers was so important in this crucial process that he devoted much of his time to the development of a preschool program that he thought fostered proper personality development. Even today, "Adlerian" preschools are popular in many parts of Europe and the United States.

Later in his career, Adler deemphasized the importance of struggling to outgrow childhood feelings of inferiority. In fact, he felt that the effort to achieve feelings of superiority over other individuals was an essentially unhealthy motive. Instead, he focused on two other factors as the most important elements in personality development. First, Adler felt that all human beings are born with a positive motive, a social interest, to establish loving, helpful relationships with others. This contrasted with Freud's belief that only selfish motives are inborn. Second, Adler felt that people's lives are governed by their goals. Often these goals are not realistic at all, but they regulate our actions anyway as we strive to achieve them. Adler's emphasis on goals, by giving such importance to a cognitive ego function, was also in sharp contrast to Freud's belief.

Karen Horney

German-born and educated, physician Karen Horney became a leader in the revision of psychoanalysis some 20 years after the first contributions of Jung and Adler. But, perhaps in part because she continued to write into the 1950s, she remains the most influential of the three. Readers today generally find her ideas more contemporary than those of Freud, Jung, or Adler. Horney considered herself to be a "Freudian" throughout her career because she agreed that unconscious conflicts were the source of most human misery and maladjustment. Like Jung and Adler, however, Horney felt that Freud placed too much importance on sexual conflicts. Moreover, she believed that conflict was not the inevitable result of inborn motives in the id. She believed instead that conflicts developed only as the result of inadequate child rearing experiences. If the child feels loved and secure, no conflicts will develop and positive aspects of the personality will dominate. If, however, the child loses confidence in parental love - because of the parent's indifference, harshness, overprotection, or other reasons - the child becomes anxiously insecure. And, this anxious insecurity is the source of all conflicts. For example, an insecure individual may develop a need to be "perfect" and feel tormented by all revelations that he is not. Another individual may aggressively push away the affection of others out of fear that they, too, will not consistently love her, but the need to push away others is in deep conflict with the underlying need to be loved.
Horney is also remembered as an important contributor to the psychology of women. She rejected Feud's notion that penis envy is the central feature of the feminine psychological makeup. Instead, she felt that women struggle to overcome a culturally-created lack of confidence and an overemphasis on the love relationship, and that this struggle has nothing whatsoever to do with the anatomy of a woman's reproductive organs.