Personality unified and self consistent sociology essay

Adler felt behaviour was motivated mainly by social influences and by a striving for superiority or success; power being the basic drive, rather than sexuality as Freud suggested. Adler (1922) said it was an inferiority complex rather than Oedipus complex that was the determining factor in neurosis. Freud felt that society rose out of aggression and sexual repression, formulating his Oedipus theory to illustrate it. He assumed experience shaped personality and that present behaviour is caused by past experiences.

Adler's' view was that we are responsible for who we are and behaviour is shaped by our experiences and view of the future, the opposite to Freud's theory. Adler also believed that psychologically healthy people behave consciously, aware of what and why they do what they do, in contrast with Freud, who placed heavy emphasis on unconscious components of behaviour. (Anne Shyne 1942)

Adler (1917) studied organ inferiority as a doctor and the physical compensations made for a part that wasn't working properly. He felt people are born with weak, inferior bodies that lead to feelings of inferiority and dependence on others. He said that if a person managed to compensate properly for inferior feelings then they will pass through this phase successfully and become a mentally healthy person. On the other hand if the person fails to compensate for their weakness they may develop an inferiority complex believing themselves less worthy than others. In his mind it was physical inferiorities, not sex, which formed the foundation of human motivation. Along with his inferiority theory he developed his ' aggression instinct' theory; aggression begins with feelings of inferiority or anxiety

within the family-our earliest social contacts. Freud disagreed at the time, however proposed a similar idea some years later: the death instinct, where self defeating behaviours, e. g. violence and aggression, are a product of this instinct. (Boeree 2006)

Feist. J, Feist, G, (2008) wrote that both Freud and Adler were influenced by the horrors of World War I and both amended their theories; Freud promoted aggression as a basic human drive alongside the sex drive, whereas Adler, influenced by the war experience for himself and those around him, concluded that social interest and compassion drove human motivation and not aggression. He used the term masculine protest, which implied a power to dominate others. Boys wanted to be seen as masculine i. e. strong and in charge, not weak or dependent (feminine), but this was misinterpreted labelling men innately as more assertive, so Adler ' downgraded' the phrase (Boeree 2006), minimising its role in his theory of abnormal development. Masculine assertiveness was not due to some innate superiority but merely the fact that boys are socially encouraged to be assertive, and girls discouraged; seen with ' boys toys' e. g. swords, guns and bow and arrows, and ' girls toys' such as dolls, prams and dolls houses. Adler revised his idea to both boys and girls begin life with the capacity for protest. Feist, J., Feist, G. (2008).

Adler (1964) identified certain factors of Individual Psychology to explain our behaviour, all of which, he felt, was the successful basis for the formation of social groups:

1. Striving for success or superiority is the driving force.

2. Subjective perceptions shape behaviour and personality.

3. Personality is unified and self-consistent.

4. Social interest dictates activity.

5. The self-consistent personality structure develops into a person's style of life.

6. Creative power moulds this style of life.

The one dynamic force behind people's behaviour is the Striving for Superiority or Success:

Adler (1956) proposed our behaviour is driven by only one motivating force – ' striving for success' or superiority. In his early theory, he used the term striving for superiority to describe psychologically unhealthy people motivated to being superior over others, but he later proposed the term striving for success, i. e. psychologically healthy people who are motivated, not just for themselves, but for others around them i. e. social interest.

Individual psychology assumes that we have physical weaknesses that activate feelings of inferiority, and it is these feelings that drive us to superiority or success and enable us to fulfil our potential. This has similarities to Rogers' theory of self-actualisation and the fully functioning person and reflects one of the philosophical roots of Friederich Nietzsche's ' will to power' i. e. human driving forces, such as ambition and achievement, to reach as high a position of in life as possible. (Boeree 2006).

Inferiority complex, where an adult feels inferior to others, is only developed if a child thinks that he is less worthy than others. For example, if tall men are seen as better in a particular culture, then short men might develop inferiority complex because he feels that he is less important than others. But, if that same short man lived in a culture that made no difference between both tall and short men then he would have never developed inferiority complex. A more general form of inferiority is the inferiority of children who are smaller and less competent, socially and intellectually than adults, and so naturally feel inferior.

An inferiority complex can be expressed as shy and timid, insecure, indecisive and submissive, reliance on others, even manipulating others to get support; the aim is to cover up ones inferiority by pretending to be superior, e. g. bullies who try to look hard or use their size or weapon to intimidate a smaller or unarmed person. More subtle examples include people who use attention-seeking behaviour, or power by committing crimes, or put others down for their gender, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, weight, height, etc. Even more subtle are those who hide their feelings of worthlessness in alcohol and drugs.

People respond to inferiority by compensation ie making up for their shortcomings; a weak organ can be made stronger or other organs can be overdeveloped to compensate, similarly people with psychological inferiorities behave similarly: Some compensate by becoming good at their particular weakness, whilst others master something else. Children, who we know feel inferior around adults, have a common goal:

" The desire to grow up, to be big, to be an adult. Most of us manage quite well" (Boree 2006).

Disadvantaged people or those with physical issues overcompensate for their weaknesses and often have exaggerated feelings of inferiority, strive hard for personal gain, and set unrealistic goals – they are often not team players, whereas those with normal feelings of inferiority compensate by co-operating with others and developing a good level of social interest, ie are team players.

People's subjective perceptions shape their behaviour and personality:

Adler was influenced by the philosopher Hans Vaihinger (1925) who said people live by fictional ideals that aren't realistic and can't be tested or confirmed, eg " Honesty is the best policy," " All men are created equal," and " The end justifies the means." Ideals such as these are usually fiction; fictionalisms can help us deal more effectively with reality, or they may block our attempts to accept it. For example, if we believe in heaven and hell, it will influence how we live.

According to Adler (1956) we strive toward a final goal to achieve superiority or success. Although the final goal is fictional it is still significant because it unifies personality and makes our behaviour logical. We create our fictional goal, constructed by heredity and environment, using our creative power, i. e. our ability to shape our behaviour and create our own personality.

By 4 or 5 years of age, children's creative power has developed enough to create their final goal; they are small and powerless and to compensate they

create their fictional goal to be big and strong and believe them to be true, e. g. children often play at being super heroes, or " want to be a fireman when I grow up".- they are our expectations for the future. A final goal reduces feelings of inferiority and sets the individual on the road to either superiority or success.

Although our final goal is set quite firmly in early childhood, we are capable of change at any point in life. The goal is fictional and unconscious, and because of this we also create temporary goals i. e. sub-goals that are not rigidly bound to the final goal but are created as partial solutions. Adler maintained that not all our choices are conscious and that style of life is created by conscious and unconscious choices; the unconscious being the unknown part of the goal.

Sub- goals and final goals fit together in a self-consistent pattern. Adler (1956) used the analogy of the playwright who builds the characters and the subplots of the play to fit with the finale of the play. When the last scene is enacted everything makes sense. When our final goal is known, our behaviour makes sense and each sub-goal takes on new significance.

Adler (1956) said that lifestyle is " not merely a mechanical reaction", but a result of our creative power, which differs from Freud who proposed that events from our past, such as childhood trauma, determine how we are now. Adler saw motivation, as not being driven by the past, but drawn towards our goals, our future, and our ideals, Teleology: " Life is not mechanical, it is hard and uncertain but always has room for change" (Boree 2006).

Personality is unified and self-consistent:

Adler didn't separate the parts of the personality as Freud did with Id, Ego and Super Ego, or conscious/pre-conscious/unconscious. He described a unified personality which can't be separated, not a series of drives and instincts, as proposed by Freud. He saw the unconscious and conscious as two cooperating parts of one unified system. A united personality being closely linked to the fictional final goal by which we organises our life to achieve a solution to a problem. I. e. a person has goal and a solution to get there, developed in childhood and handed to the adult as the major life task, all these parts work together self-consistently to achieve.

Adler recognised different ways of operating with unity and self-consistency. One way was what he called Organ Dialect, the language of the physical body, where the individual uses their body to communicate their goal and all actions and functions play a part, i. e. body, thoughts and feelings work together.

Adler (1956) said that through organ dialect, the body's organs:

" Speak a language which is usually more expressive and discloses the individual's opinion more clearly than words are able to do" (p. 223).

He presented an example of organ dialect; a boy who wet the bed to convey a message that he doesn't want to obey his parents'. His behaviour is:

" really a creative expression, for the child is speaking with his bladder instead of his mouth" (p. 223).

A person is not a different person when he is being a dad, a husband, working, or when he is with friends etc, he is the same person pursuing the same life goals and using the same tactics to achieve them; i. e. he is a single, unified, complete person. Unlike Freud, Adler did not view parts of the personality in conflict with each other; instead he saw actions, thoughts, and feelings working together.

Human activity in terms of social Interest:

Social interest is how we identify with society, i. e. care in families, community etc. Adler believed such social interest is not solely innate or solely learned, but a combination of the two: Its nature is innate but needs to be nurtured to survive (Boeree 2006). Adler (1927) felt it was the natural inferiority of individuals that directs their behaviour to form groups (society) for protection, support, love etc. That is, social interest is necessary for forming societies and ultimately to perpetuate the human race,. Adler (1924) believed that we were social beings:

" The human being and all his capabilities and forms of expression are inseparably linked to the existence of others" concluding that a social person is " much closer to happiness than the isolated person striving for superiority".

Adler (1933) cited the mutually beneficial relationship of mother and child as an example of the way social interest may originate. Adler's concept of the mother-child relationship was opposite to that of Freud, who described this relationship as based partly on oral, cannibalistic drives.

The self-consistent personality structure develops into a Life Style:

Life-Style refers to an individual's striving towards meaning and belonging. It is a pattern of behaviour that begins early in life and forms a theme there-on. It is the result of inferiorities, perceived or actual, and results in the implementation of schemes e. g. Adler's final goal to overcome death propelled him to become a doctor. (NCHC 2012)

Life style is unique to each person and is the arrangement of our social, domestic and occupational activities. Although the final goal is fairly rigid, lifestyle need not be and flexibility and diversity is seen in psychologically healthy individuals, whereas, psychologically unhealthy people are more inflexible and are less able to choose new ways of responding to what's going on around them. Healthy people express their social interest through action; actively striving to solve what Adler called the three life tasks – work, friendship and love, and whose behaviour represents the ideal characteristics for survival of society, and hence humankind.

How we behave to achieve life style and final goal is supported by private logic, i. e. the private reasoning we invent to solve problems that is not understood by others. An individual's private logic consists of what he really believes and intends. It includes the long-range goals of the life style, the short range goals of the immediate situation, and the rationalisations he gives himself for what he is doing, and also consciously or unconsciously how he instigates others to behave in ways to prove his belief.

The origin is in childhood; it explains an individual's own experiences to self, which is then used to justify their actions, eg a child learns how to behave to get an adults attention – which may be to misbehave. Private logic differs from what is commonly thought, i. e. common sense

"…the degree of the discrepancy between private logic and common sense, what Adler called the iron logic of social living, is an indicator or measure of mental health". (Manaster, 2009, p. 5)

Therapy draws awareness of mistaken beliefs or faulty interpretations, and hence, the errors in our private logic, life style and fictional goal.

Life Style is moulded by people's creative power:

The concept of the creative self means that the individual is responsible for himself, not blaming others or uncontrollable forces for his situation. The creative self interprets inferiority, creates the final goal and aligns life style and private logic. It can be flexible to what's going on around us, initiating and maintaining change. As Adler says, we are the masters of our own personalities and destinies-creators rather than passive reactors (NCHC 2012)

Adler believed that we create patterns of behaviour, safeguarding tendencies, to protect our exaggerated sense of self-esteem against public disgrace. They enable us to hide an inflated self-image and maintain our life style, e. g. excuses, aggression and withdrawal. Freud called them ego defence mechanisms (EDM's). Both men agreed that they protect against anxiety, however, Freud's theory is that they are unconscious, protecting the

ego from anxiety, whereas Adler's theory suggests they are largely conscious and protect our fragile self-esteem from public disgrace

Family Constellations: as well as attributing parents and other adults as early influences on a child, Adler also include siblings as early influences as well. (Boeree 2006). He believed pampering and neglect were principal factors predisposing an inferiority complex and that a person's perceived role within a family was more important than the birth order itself.

The only child is more likely to be pampered, denying opportunity to develop courage and self reliance. If the parents are abusive or neglectful the only child has to endure it alone, suffering a childhood full of humiliation and insecurity.

The first child starts out as an only child, with lots of attention, but this all changes when a second child arrives. At first, he tries to regain his only child status by acting like the baby, but is quickly told to ' grow up', and so rebels, misbehaves and withdraws. According to Adler the first child is more likely to become a problem child who is solitary and more conservative than others in the family.

The second child has the first child as a pace-setter and tends to compete with him. They often succeed, but often feel as if the race is never over, never quite ' getting there'. Middle children behave in a similar way.

The youngest child is often the most pampered, the ' baby of the family' and is often treated as such. They are the second most likely problem child. Inferiority to anyone older and bigger than them themselves is common;

however, they also have the advantage of older siblings to learn from, and can be driven to do better than them.

Conditions such as illness or disability can be an over-riding factor, with the sickly child taking the ' youngest child' position regardless of actual position.

A major contribution of birth order research is that it has helped psychologists understand why brothers and sisters within the same family are no more similar in personality than are those from different families. According to Sulloway (1997), the family is not a single shared environment but a place of differing areas that provide siblings with different outlooks on life. The personalities of siblings differ because they adopt different strategies to achieve parental approval.

Freud's Oedipal theory explains how he saw social development. He believed the child's behaviour is driven by an innate sexual and aggressive drive, completely ignoring the paternal behaviour that Adler believed shaped behaviour and development. It occurs during the phallic stage (around five years) of Freud's psycho-sexual theory of personality. The five year-old child feels hostile/incestuous towards the parent, feelings which can't be realised so instead they are repressed. Males repress their feelings for their mother fearing castration by their fathers, hiding their feelings in the unconscious, to enable them gain their fathers favour by becoming like him. The girl believes she has been castrated and blames her mother. The Oedipus Complex for her (sometimes called Electra Complex) is a desire for the father and fear/hatred of the mother, leading to repression of such feelings.

Freud proposed that sex and aggression drives motivated behaviour whereas Adler believed that a sense of inferiority and a lifetime of compensation was the motivating factor. He believed in only one driving force behind our behaviour, the ' striving for perfection', that leads us closer to how we want to be. He believed that as adult's we have the capacity to change and grow, allowing us to change what we don't like, whereas Freud suggested these were fixed in childhood. Adler looked at individuals in their individual social situation, looking at influences such as parenting styles, families and birth order, and how they compensated to overcome inferiorities. A neglectful child learns not to trust which has a negative effect on relationship forming, whereas a pampered/over-protected child grows up ill equipped to deal with problems life throws at them. Both styles have an affect how an individual forms and behaves in groups/social settings.

Adler believed that we become stable and useful human beings, forming communities which provide protection, support and love, by success in the three life tasks of love, work and social interaction, of which we are in control. Healthy people are successful at these tasks.

Neo-Freudians including Adler, Jung, and Erikson, known as Neo-Freudians because of their early associations with Freudian theory but later developing their own spin on things, also put emphasis on social relationships. Both individual psychology and humanistic psychology hold that the individual is the best influence of their needs, desires, interests, and growth within society, for society and as a society.