# CHAPTER 5

## HORNEY'S SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PSYCHOANALYSIS

# Hypercompetitiveness: A Major Form of Neurotic Competitiveness

- **Hypercompetitiveness:** indiscriminate need to win at all costs in order to feel superior
- Hypercompetitive parents tend to treat their children poorly, giving rise to neurosis
    - Traits of hypercompetitiveness
        - Hostile
        - Dogmatic
        - Arrogant
        - Aggressive
        - Derisive toward others

# Hypercompetitiveness: A Major Form of Neurotic Competitiveness (cont'd.)

- Hypercompetitives:
  - Characterized by **primary psychopathy:** aggressiveness, callousness, and lack of remorse
  - Not characterized by **secondary psychopathy:** excessive guilt; lack of clarity about goals
- Hypercompetitiveness and academic success; at what price?
  - Lying
  - Cheating
  - Plagiarism

# Competition Avoidance: The Other Major Form of Neurotic Competitiveness

- **Competition avoidance:** need to check ruthless ambition and excessive competitive strivings because of extreme fear of losing the affection and approval of others due to success or failure in competition

- Competition avoiders:

  - Minimize their chances for success by belittling themselves

  - Feel embarrassed or humiliated by competitive defeat

  - Engage in **self-handicapping:** giving plausible excuses for poor performance in order to protect one's self-esteem

**Chapter**

# Personal Development Competitiveness: Competing in a Psychologically Healthy Way

- **Personal development competitiveness:** an attitude in which the primary focus is not primarily on the outcome (i.e., winning), but rather more on the enjoyment and mastery of the task
  - Individuals are more concerned with self-discovery, self-improvement, and task mastery than with comparisons with others
- **Personal development competitors** want strongly to win and be successful, but not at the expense of other people

# The Etiology of Neurosis in the Family

- Attitudes and behaviors of hypercompetitive parents that cause disturbed relationships:
  - Direct or indirect domination
  - Indifference and erratic behavior
  - Lack of respect for individual needs and real guidance
  - Disparaging attitudes
  - Lack of reliable warmth
  - Having to take sides in parental disagreements
  - Isolation from other children
  - Injustice and discrimination
  - Unkept promises and hostile atmosphere
- Poor treatment by parents creates **basic anxiety:** person feels isolated and helpless in a potentially hostile world, leading to neurosis

# The Use of Neurotic Strategies to Cope with Feelings of Basic Anxiety

- Neurotic need for affection and approval
- Neurotic need for partner to control one's life
- Neurotic need to restrict one's activities
- Neurotic need for power
- Neurotic need to exploit others
- Neurotic need for social recognition and prestige
- Neurotic need for personal admiration
- Neurotic ambition for personal achievement
- Neurotic need for self-sufficiency and independence
- Neurotic need for perfection and unassailability

# The Three Basic Neurotic Trends

- Horney simplified the 10 neurotic strategies into three basic neurotic trends
  - **Compliant type:** individuals who cope with feelings of basic anxiety by indiscriminately seeking the approval and affection of others through excessive conformity; such individuals move toward people, a trend that protects them against basic anxiety by self-effacement and obliteration
  - **Aggressive type:** individuals who protect themselves against feelings of insecurity by exploiting others in order to feel superior; such individuals adjust by moving against people, a trend that seeks to control basic anxiety through domination and exploitation of others
  - **Detached type:** individuals who protect themselves by continual avoidance of others; such individuals move away from people, a trend that protects the person against basic anxiety by utter detachment and extreme self-sufficiency

# The Basic Conflict in Neurosis

- For neurotic individuals one trend  (compliant, aggressive,  or detached) predominates
  - The gratification of the associated needs is pursued relentlessly and endlessly
  - The other two trends and their associated needs are repressed
- **Basic conflict in neurosis:** turmoil created within neurotics because the three major trends are incompatible with one another

# Personality Development

- Horney's critique of Freud

  – Sexual and aggressive strivings are **NOT** more important than the environment

  – Important experiences in the formation of character are **NOT** primarily sexual in nature

  – In adulthood, people are **NOT** doomed to repeat compulsively ways of behaving learned in childhood

- Do women really want to be men?

  – Penis envy is **NOT** a castration complex, but rather as a justifiable envy of qualities associated with masculinity in our culture

# Horney's Humanistic View of Development

- **Humanistic view of development:** each person is special and has a unique set of potentials that will flourish under wise parental guidance
  - **Real self:** unique set of potentials for constructive growth within each person

# Horney's Humanistic View of Development (cont'd.)

- Alienation and the idealized self
  - **Idealized self:** defensive identification of neurotics with their idealized images
    - **Tyranny of the shoulds:** moral imperatives that drive neurotics to accept nothing less than perfection from themselves
  - When neurotics compare the **actual self** (the self as it is at the moment) against the idealized self, the actual self inevitably falls short

# Horney's Humanistic View of Development (cont'd.)

- Externalization: trying to keep the idealized self  intact
  - **Externalization:** tendency of neurotics to experience internal processes as if they occurred outside the self and to hold external factors responsible for their difficulties
    - Involves projection: tendency to attribute one's own failings and shortcomings to others

# Horney's Humanistic View of Development (cont'd.)

- Auxiliary approaches to artificial harmony
  - Seven defenses used by neurotics to keep the idealized self intact
    - **Blind spots:** painful experiences are denied or ignored because they are at variance with the idealized self
    - **Compartmentalization:** alleviation of tensions by separating beliefs and actions
    - **Rationalization:** person wards off anxiety by offering plausible, but inaccurate, excuses for his or her conduct
    - **Excessive control:** person exercises willpower to keep emotional impulses under control

# Horney's Humanistic View of Development (cont'd.)

– Seven defenses used by neurotics to keep the idealized self intact (cont'd.):

- **Arbitrary rightness:** conviction that one is always right
- **Elusiveness:** person refuses to take a position on anything so that he or she can never be proven wrong and criticized or ridiculed by others
- **Cynicism:** person claims to believe in nothing so that he or she cannot be hurt or disappointed by others

# Assessment Techniques

- Free association
  - Interpretation different from Freud's
- Dream analysis
  - Interpretation different from Freud's
- Relationship between analyst and patient
  - More honesty with patients
  - Active and directive in offering suggestions

# Theory's Implications for Therapy

- Neurotics are alienated from their real selves and from others
- Neurotics can realize their potential only when they are able to relinquish their illusions about themselves and their illusory goals
- Self-knowledge must be intellectual and emotional to promote change
- The goal is to begin to find the inner certainty that comes from a feeling of belonging through active and unselfish participation

# Evaluative Comments

- **Comprehensiveness:** limited scope
- **Precision and testability:** not very precise and very difficult to test adequately
- **Parsimony:** appropriately complex
- **Empirical validity:** not much prior research interest; new development instrument is generating more tests
- **Heuristic value:** major contributions to the development of humanistic psychology movement
- **Applied value:** has high applied value for cognitive-behavioral therapy