Chapter 4 Big Ideas

Individual Psychology
  - Alfred Adler
  - Social Interest
  - Finalism
  - Fictional Finalisms
  - Striving for Superiority
  - Inferiority Feelings
  - Style of Life

Social Interest
  - Oldest children fear being "dethroned" by younger siblings
  - Second/Middle children feel need to race to "dethrone" eldest
  - Lastborn children more sociable, dependent

Creative Self
  - Neurosis springs from inappropriate life-styles, inappropriate goals, or fictional finalism
  - Overcompensation
  - Inferiority Complex
  - Superiority Complex
  - Safeguarding Tendencies

Why Interpsychic?

- Freud, Jung
  - Stress the importance of unconscious forces, psyche
  - Sexual forces, biological forces
  - Intrapsychic forces

- Adler, Sullivan
  - Human behavior/dysfunction more the result of social and cultural factors
  - Interpsychic forces
Individual Psychology

Alfred Adler
- 1870-1937
- Born in Vienna
- Second of six children
- Initially doted on by mother
- Father had lofty expectations
  - Only an “average” student

Individual Psychology (cont’d)

Alfred Adler
- Childhood disease—rickets (made him clumsy and awkward)
- When younger brother born, mother shifted her affections
- Watched brother die in next bed
- Brushes with death (run over twice, pneumonia)
- Briefly associated with Vienna Psychoanalytic society
  - Never psychoanalyzed
  - Dissented with Freud from the beginning

Social Interest

- All organisms strive to maintain life and seek nourishment, and reproduce
  - But, humans have tamed these interests to conform within and to serve society
- Social interest refers to adapting one’s self to social conditions
  - Social conformity
  - Not automatic: must be cultivated
Finalism

- All actions are governed by goals
  - Freud was interested in seeking causality in past experiences
  - Adler focused on the future orientation of goals
- We do not think, feel, or act without the perception of a goal
- Like Jung, emphasis on purposeful living
- Finalism refers to the way in which individuals pursue their future goals

Fictional Finalisms

- Fiction: Latin *fictio* (fashion, construct, invent)
- Fictional finalism refers to our tendency to “fill in the blank”
- We cannot “know” Truth
  - Instead, we construct an approximation of truth
    - We assume that people are good; it’s best to tell the truth
    - Religion and God
- Finalisms can be healthy or unhealthy
  - No absolute good/bad or right/wrong
  - Instead, how useful is the fiction
Striving for Superiority

• The ultimate fictional finalism that we all maintain
• Part of our struggle to survive
  – Major motivation for aggression
• Superiority does not refer to surpassing others
  – Competent, effective
  – Perfect: Latin perfectus (completed, made whole)
• Encompasses both healthy and unhealthy strivings
  – Dog eat dog (competitive)
  – Collaborative

Inferiority Feelings

• We seek superiority to manage our feelings of inferiority
• We feel inferior from birth
  – Helpless infants, totally dependent on adults
  – Originally considered “organ” inferiority—clinical observations as a physician
• Masculine protest refers to our efforts to compensate for inferiority
  – Originally, inferiority associated with femininity
  – Later changes opinion, proponent of women’s liberation

Style of Life

• Style of Life: Characteristic way in which the individual develops superiority
  – Inner goal orientation/fictional finalisms
  – Environmental forces (assisting/impeding)
  – Mistaken/useful types
    • Ruling type—aggressive, dominating people; little social/cultural interests
    • Getting type—dependent people who take rather than give
    • Avoiding type—people who escape rather than engaging
    • Socially Useful type—social interest and activity

Birth Order

• Important factor influencing style of life
• Family Constellation refers to one’s position in the family
  – Birth order/number of siblings
  – Presence or absence of parents
• Oldest children often more intelligent, achievement oriented, conforming
  – Adler referred to Freud as an eldest son

Birth Order (cont’d)

• Oldest children fear being “dethroned” by younger siblings
• Second/Middle children feel need to race to “dethrone” eldest
  – Competitive and ambitious, may surpass first born
  – Adler was a second born…
• Lastborn children more sociable, dependent
  – May strive to surpass older siblings
  – If “babied” may remain helpless and dependent

Birth Order (cont’d)

• Only children tend to be more like older children
  – Enjoy being the center of attention
  – Spend more time in company of adults
  – Mature sooner, more responsible
• Only children more likely to get pampered
• Middle children show combination of older and younger
  – If children spaced years apart, may be more like only children
Creative Self

- One’s pursuits become creative organization for one’s life
  - Creative self organizes life experiences, interprets these experiences, and renders them meaningful
  - Individuals actively and purposely shape their responses to the environment
    - Result of heredity + environment
- Adler minimized role of unconscious
  - In contrast to Freud
  - De-emphasized determinism (optimistic)
  - Creative self represented extent of human potential

Adlerian Psychotherapy

- Neurosis springs from inappropriate lifestyles, inappropriate goals, or fictional finalism
  - "Mistaken style of life," "life lie"
  - Acting "as if," but actively creating their destinies
- Overcompensation an exaggerated attempt to cover a weakness
  - Associated with denial
  - Inability to accept reality of the situation
    - Monty Python: "It's just a flesh wound"

Adlerian Psychotherapy

- Inferiority Complex
  - Individuals who feel highly inadequate
- Superiority Complex
  - An exaggerated sense of self importance
- Safeguarding Tendencies
  - Maladaptive strategies to ward off fear of inferiority
    - We all use safeguarding techniques, neurotics are just one-trick ponies
- Restore patient's sense of reality
  - Confront "life lies," overcompensation
More of the Interpersonal

Harry Stack Sullivan

• Personality: characteristic ways in which an individual deals with other people
• Stages of development: socially, not biologically, determined
• Participant observation: real-world observations of problem behaviors/situations in order to develop appropriate interventions
• Interview: interpersonal process between client and therapist

Family Therapy

• Psychological problems developed and maintained in the social context of the family
• Focus on the process of family communication and interaction more than the surface content