burdens placed on her by the culture, not because of inherent inferiorities. In a society where both men and women are free to become whatever they desire, there is little reason to think that girls would want to be boys, or vice versa. In many ways, we can see that Horney's thinking was well ahead of its time. Her death in 1952 did not allow her to see how feminists would later use many of her ideas to promote the cause of gender equality.

Application: Psychoanalytic Theory and Religion

"The religions of mankind must be classed among the mass delusions. No one, needless to say, who shares a delusion ever recognizes it as such."
Sigmund Freud

The psychoanalytic theorists did more than describe personality and develop treatments for psychological disorders. These writers also offered important new perspectives on humankind and answers to some enduring philosophical questions about the human condition. Inevitably, their concerns overlapped with some of those traditionally addressed by theologians: Are people inherently good or bad? Should we sacrifice personal pleasure for the common good? Is the source of happiness within each of us or found in powers greater than our own?

In a style that typified his career, Freud directly challenged conventional thinking on many religious issues. Two books, in particular, *The Future of an Illusion* and *Civilization and Its Discontents*, assaulted widely held religious beliefs. Although Freud understood that organized religion provided solace for the uneducated, he lamented its widespread acceptance by intelligent people. "The whole thing is so patently infantile, so foreign to reality," Freud wrote, "that to anyone with a friendly attitude to humanity it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above this view of life" (1930/1961, p. 21).

Why, then, do so many people believe? According to Freud, religious behavior represents a form of neurosis. It begins with the baby's feelings of helplessness and longing for a powerful protector, presumably the father. Freud called religion a type of collective wish fulfillment. To protect ourselves from a threatening and unpredictable world, we project our imagined savior from this predicament outward in the form of a God. Thus, to Freud, God is but an unconscious father figure generated in an infantile way to provide us with feelings of security.

Several neo-Freudian theorists also addressed religious questions in their writings; two, in particular, were Carl Jung and Erich Fromm. Jung, whose father was a minister in the Swiss Reformed Church, struggled with religious issues throughout much of his life, often wavering between favorable and unfavorable impressions of modern religion. He once referred to "the religious myth," yet at another point he described religious experience as "a great treasure" providing "a source of life, meaning, and beauty" (Bechtle, 1984). Toward the end of his career, Jung seemed to take a more favorable approach to organized religion. He acknowledged that religion often provides followers with a sense of purpose and feelings of security.

Jung often insisted that the question of God's existence was outside the realm of science and hence nothing he could provide answers about. His interest was with humankind's eternal need to find religion. Why does religion surface in all cultures? Why is some entity similar to the Judeo-Christian God found in each of these cultures? Jung's answer was that each of us inherits a God archetype in our collective unconscious. This primordial image causes Godlike images to surface in the dreams, folklore, artwork,

and experiences of people everywhere. We can easily conceive of a God, find evidence for His existence, and experience deep religious feelings because we were born with a kind of unconscious predisposition for Him. Scholars continue to debate whether Jung meant by this that God exists only in our collective unconscious and therefore that the traditional description of God as an external entity is a myth (Bianchi, 1988). Although at times Jung does appear to argue that God exists only in the human mind, other references suggest he was not ready to make such a bold statement.

Jung maintained that organized religions often took advantage of powerful archetypal symbols in promoting themselves to followers. Indeed, he described Christ as a symbol, with the four points on the cross representing the good-versus-bad and the spiritual-versus-material aspects of our being. In addition to religious art and scripture, Jung said, religious symbols are often found in our dreams and in the hallucinations of psychotic patients.

Jung also suggested that many people seek out psychotherapy when their religion fails to provide reassurance. As such, modern psychotherapy has taken on the role once reserved for the clergy. Jung believed that many of his patients needed to resolve the inevitable conflict between the good and evil sides of their personalities. Whereas religious leaders use confession, absolution, and forgiveness to symbolically help followers reconcile these two sides of themselves, he maintained that psychologists can achieve the same end through psychotherapy.

Jerry Burger/Santa Clara University

Why do people feel deeply about their religious beliefs? This is one of the questions addressed by Freud and many of the neo-Freudian theorists. Freud declared religion a delusion, whereas Jung pondered the nature of religious experiences throughout his career.

Erich Fromm, a German Neo-Freudian who often applied psychoanalytic theory to social issues, was fascinated by the seemingly universal human need for religion (Fromm, 1950, 1966). He believed that people turn to the powerful authority of the church to escape an internal sense of powerlessness and loneliness. "People return to religion … not as an act of faith but in order to escape an intolerable doubt," Fromm wrote. "They make this decision not out of devotion but in search of security" (1950, p. 4). Awareness that we are individuals, responsible for ourselves and for finding our own meaning in life, is frightening to many people. Religion provides an escape from these fears.

However, Fromm also drew a distinction between *authoritarian religions* and *humanistic religions*. The former emphasize that we are under the control of a powerful God, whereas in the latter, God is a symbol of our own power. Fromm argued that authoritarian religions deny people their personal identity, whereas humanistic religions provide an opportunity for personal growth. Thus, while condemning some religions, Fromm recognized the potential for individuation and finding happiness within others.

Today, the writings of Freud, Jung, Fromm, and other psychoanalytic theorists are studied and debated by theology students around the world. Although most theologians reject psychoanalytic interpretations of religious behavior, few are able to ignore them.

Assessment: Personal Narratives

Imagine that your life story were being made into a movie. Forget for the moment which actor will play you, but instead ask yourself what scenes would be needed for the audience to fully appreciate your character. What themes would run throughout the movie? What are the turning points, the lessons learned, the hardships overcome? In other words, what experiences have shaped or illustrate the kind of person you are?

Researchers sometimes use a variation of this procedure to study personality (McAdams, 2008; McAdams & McLean, 2013; Singer, Blagov, Berry, & Oost, 2013). They ask participants to tell their life stories or some of the critical scenes in that story. When people provide stories about themselves, particularly those that supposedly shaped them into the kind of person they are today, they reveal their personality in a very telling way. They're saying, "This is the kind of person I am, and this is how I got to be that person." These descriptions give personality researchers a rich source of information not easily captured with other assessment procedures (Torges, Stewart, & Duncan, 2009).

Measuring Personality with Personal Narratives

Researchers who examine **personal narratives** typically interview participants, although sometimes participants respond to questions in writing (McAdams, 1993, 2004). In most cases, people are asked to describe scenes from their life. These scenes might include a high point in their life, a turning point in their life, an important childhood memory, and so on. These accounts obviously tell us something about the character of the participant. But how do researchers turn these descriptions into data they can use to compare individuals and test hypotheses? First, interviews are recorded and probably transcribed. Next, judges review the interview transcripts or the written responses and code the stories using preset criteria. For example, judges may count the number of times certain themes are mentioned, such as overcoming

hardships. Or they may place the stories into one of several predefined categories. In most cases, two or more judges independently code the stories. If the judges agree on the vast majority of their assessments, then the ratings are considered reliable and useful (Chapter 2). However, if one judge rates a story high in achievement themes, while another rates the same story as low, then it's impossible to know which of these assessments is correct. The solution is to either clarify the coding criteria or retrain the judges on how to apply the criteria.

Like other measures of personality, scores from personal narratives tend to be consistent over time, but because they reflect issues individuals face as they go through life, they also are affected by life experiences (Dunlop, Guo & McAdams, 2016; McAdams et al., 2006). Although straightforward, the procedure also raises some concerns. Chief among these is how much credence researchers should give these autobiographical accounts (Pasupathi, McLean, & Weeks, 2009; Woike, 2008). That is, how accurately do people report their life stories? Even the best memory is likely to be a bit hazy when looking back several decades. Participants may selectively remember flattering portrayals of themselves and overlook failures and embarrassments. And most of us have stories we might not want to reveal to a researcher.

In response to this concern, most investigators acknowledge that personal narratives are selective presentations and most likely fall short of perfect accuracy (McAdams, Diamond, de St. Aubin, & Mansfield, 1997). However, they argue that what people choose to remember and the way they construct their past is revealing. It's more important that an individual believes a tragic event shaped his or her character than whether the event actually did.

Generativity and Life Stories

Psychologists have found personal narratives especially useful for studying Erik Erikson's stages of personality development. Much of this research has focused on the seventh stage in that model, *generativity versus stagnation* (Frensch, Pratt, & Norris, 2007; Mackinnon, Nosko, Pratt, & Norris, 2011; Pratt, Norris, Hebblethwaite, & Arnold, 2008). According to Erikson, middle-aged adults often are motivated to develop a sense of generativity. People this age obtain personal satisfaction and enrichment through the influence they have on the next generation. Erikson and his followers thought of generativity in much broader terms than parents influencing their children (McAdams, Hart, & Maruna, 1998). People can obtain a sense of generativity by working directly with youth as an uncle, scout leader, or Sunday school teacher. Adults also can satisfy their need for generativity by doing their part to create a better world for the next generation to live in.

One team of researchers asked elderly adults to write down memories from each decade of their lives (Conway & Holmes, 2004). Presumably, the participants wrote about events that characterized the way they thought of their life during those decades. Judges then coded the stories according to which Eriksonian theme they portrayed. For example, a memory about falling in love was placed in the *intimacy versus isolation* category. A story about helping a grandchild overcome a personal problem fell into the *generativity versus stagnation* category. As shown in Figure 5-2, the number of stories reflecting a generativity theme peaked during the midlife decades, just as we would predict from Erikson's theory.

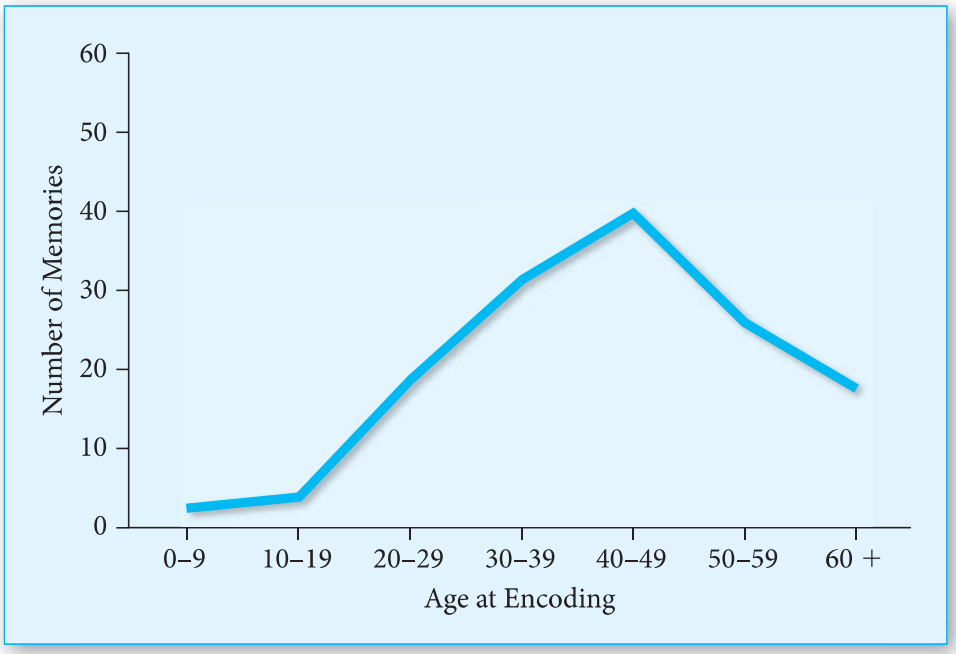

Figure 5.2 Number of Memories with a Generativity Theme

Source: Adapted from Conway and Holmes (2004).

What is it about some people that enables them to develop a sense of generativity while others do not? One way to answer this question is to look at the life stories people tell. Compared to adults who fail to develop a sense of generativity, highly generative adults are likely to provide stories in which bad situations lead to good outcomes (McAdams & Gao, 2015; McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, & Bowman, 2001). In these stories, a personal tragedy, such as the death of a loved one, eventually leads the storyteller to an increased sensitivity to the suffering of others and a commitment to help those going through similar experiences. Not surprising then, stories from highly generative adults tend to contain more themes about friendship, sharing, affiliation, nurturance, and being prosocial (Mansfield & McAdams, 1996; McAdams & Guo, 2015). It's not difficult to see how middle-aged adults who have lived such lives—or who at least recall their lives in this way—would be concerned about helping and nurturing the next generation.

Strengths and Criticisms of Neo-Freudian Theories

Strengths

The primary strength of the neo-Freudian theories is their elaboration of important concepts that Freud had ignored or de-emphasized. Most of these theorists identified the role social factors play in the formation and change of personality. Many described the ways personality develops beyond the first few years of life.

And most neo-Freudian theorists presented a much more optimistic and flattering picture of humankind than Freud had. They described the positive functions served by the ego rather than restricting its role to arbitrator between the demanding id and superego.

The neo-Freudians also introduced many new concepts into the psychological literature. As with Freudian theory, many of these ideas have made their way into everyday language. People speak of identity crises, introverts, and inferiority complexes without recognizing the references to Erikson, Jung, and Adler.

Another gauge of a personality theory's value is the extent to which it influences later theorists and psychotherapists. In this respect, the neo-Freudians can claim some success. The optimistic tone about humans that characterized many neo-Freudians' views helped pave the way for the humanistic personality theories (Chapter 11). Similarly, the emphasis on social aspects of personality development was undoubtedly a considerable step in the evolution of social learning approaches to personality (Chapter 13). And the techniques and approaches developed by each of the neo-Freudians have been adopted or adapted by many contemporary psychotherapists.

In sum, the neo-Freudian theorists did much to make parts of the psychoanalytic approach palatable to psychologists and nonpsychologists alike. In fact, these theories provide a bridge between Freud's concepts and many later personality theories. However, no individual neo-Freudian theorist, or even the theories taken as a whole, has ever reached the level of acclaim that Freud did.

Criticisms

Many of the limitations critics point to in Freud's theory also are present in some of the neo-Freudian works. Like Freud's work, some of the neo-Freudian theories are supported with questionable evidence. In particular, support for Jung's description of the collective unconscious comes from myths, legends, dreams, occult phenomena, and artwork. Other neo-Freudians relied heavily on information gleaned from their patients during psychotherapy when drawing their own conclusions about human personality. These practices raise questions about biased interpretations and the applicability of the theories to normally functioning adults.

A second problem with the neo-Freudians as a group is that they often oversimplified or ignored important concepts. None dealt with so many topics in so much depth as Freud. Consequently, the neo-Freudians sometimes failed to effectively address questions central to psychoanalytic theory. This observation has led some people to criticize neo-Freudian works as incomplete or limited accounts of personality and human behavior. For example, Erikson has been criticized for what some consider a superficial treatment of anxiety's role in the development of psychological disorders. Similarly, Adler has been accused of oversimplifying in his attempt to explain many complex behaviors in terms of a single concept, the striving for superiority.