

## SPECIAL ARTICLE

# Behavioral Styles in Infancy and Adulthood: The Work of Karen Horney and Attachment Theorists Collaterally Considered

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Both Horney and attachment theorists are concerned with understanding those factors that describe an individual's quality of adaptation to important life events and stress. Horney's theory describes the deviant functioning of three adult neurotic personality types from a psychoanalytic perspective and speculates on early parent-child relationships in regard to later functioning. Attachment theory, from an ethological perspective, describes three characteristic modes of infant functioning based on observations of child-mother interaction. While Horney and attachment theorists are different in theoretical perspective, population studied, methodology used, and the segment of the life cycle on which they focus, both conceptualizations are remarkably similar in the description of three fundamental behavioral styles that define the quality of the individual's adaptation in relation to others and ability to deal with stress.

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Theoretical formulations of normal and pathological development in child psychiatry and psychology are based on the premise that later coping abilities and competencies are related to early development. Most psychoanalytic theories maintain that nonorganic types of psychopathology are formed in childhood around attempts to defend against experiences of emotional conflict and stress. In particular, the work of Karen Horney (1937, 1950) delineates three basic personality styles which vary along a continuum of severity and which describe a person's characteristic mode of functioning. Horney's theory, based on clinical observation of adults, focuses on the neurotic individual's interpersonal relations with others and speculates on how certain behavioral styles of adults evolved from the early parent-child relationship.

In developmental psychology, attachment theory, based on experimental observation of infants and mothers, postulates that many forms of psychiatric disturbances can be attributed to deviations in the development of the early affective tie between infant and caregiver. In the work of Ainsworth and her colleagues (1972, 1978), three basic modes of the infant's relating to the primary caregiver (in western culture, usually the mother) have been delineated. Individual differences in the infant's relationship to mother are viewed as they relate to qualitative differences in the way attachment behaviors are organized.

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Within the attachment perspective, it is assumed that, despite dramatic changes in behavioral repertoire which accompany advances in developmental level, there is a continuity in the manner in which an individual characteristically relates to others and stress. The ways in which children organize their behavior with respect to a mother figure during the first year of life is said to provide the foundation for later social, emotional and cognitive adaptation.

While Horney and attachment theorists are different in theoretical perspective, population studied, methodology used, and the segment of the life cycle on which they focus, both conceptualizations are remarkably similar in the description of three fundamental behavioral styles that define the quality of the individual's adaptation in relation to others and ability to deal with stress. Considered concomitantly, the work of Horney and attachment theorists offer the opportunity to better understand the developmental path from early modes of behavior to later adult personality styles as a continuum of adaptive functioning. The analysis presented here is not intended as a complete representation of the work of Horney or attachment theorists. Rather, those aspects of each perspective that illustrate the commonality in conceptualization are highlighted with an aim toward synthesis.

Horney, unlike Freud and Jung, does not assert that conflict is built into the nature of the individual and therefore inevitable. Conflict is the result of social conditions and the person who is likely to become neurotic is said to have experienced culturally determined difficulties during childhood. Conflicts and problems are viewed as avoidable or resolvable if the child is raised in a loving, tolerant, warm environment.

According to Horney, adaptive growth is the free

development of the unique potentials of the person's genetic and individual nature toward self-realization. Positive human development in the child requires warmth for a sense of inner security and freedom, goodwill, which entails guidance and encouragement from others, as well as the experience of friction with the wishes and wills of others. The processes of self-realization depend on the child's development of confidence in himself or herself and others. Horney's formulation focuses on how the child's relationship with others facilitates or obstructs the process of self-realization. In developing healthy human connections, the child must learn to utilize three fundamental forms of relating: (1) moving toward people or the ability to want and give affection, (2) moving against people or the ability to fight, and (3) moving away from people or the ability to keep to oneself. These three styles of relating are complementary capacities necessary for adaptation and good human relationships. Each style may be seen as more or less appropriate given certain life situations. For example, the young child may be viewed as adaptive if it can seek comfort from a parent when it is frightened by thunder (move toward), if it can defend itself when being teased by a peer (move against), or if it can play with a toy and explore the environment on its own (move away). The three capacities of moving toward, against and away enable the person to employ alternative modes of functioning in the service of self-realization and in dealing with the stresses of life. It is implied that the child's ability to utilize flexibly the three modes of behavior is essential for coping with the general human phenomena of *Angst der Kreator* which may be an obstacle to self-realization. *Angst der Kreator* is a term which indicates that all human beings face the anxiety of being helpless in the face of uncontrollable phenomena such as death, illness, old age and catastrophes of nature. *Angst der Kreator* is first experienced in early childhood helplessness, and the child's task is not to be overwhelmed but to develop its unique capacities. On a more culturally specific level, Horney indicates that using all three styles of relating enables the individual to deal with typical western culture problems such as competition, fear of failure, emotional isolation and distrust of others and self.

While most children are able to utilize all three modes in dealing with stress, others are believed to experience basic anxiety which thwarts their ability (to varying degrees) to appropriately, flexibly move toward, away and against. Basic anxiety is defined as a feeling of being insignificant, small, helpless, deserted, endangered in a world that is out to cheat, abuse, attack, humiliate, betray, and envy (Horney, 1937). Basic anxiety or, briefly, the fear of being alone and abandoned in a hostile world, results largely from

a conflict between existing dependency on parents and rebellion against them. The hostility toward the parent must be repressed because of the dependency. The repression of hostility places the child in a defenseless position because it makes the child lose sight of the danger against which it should fight. This defenselessness which is accompanied by the fear of retaliation, Horney believes, is a primary factor in accounting for the neurotic adult's basic feeling of helplessness in a potentially hostile world. It should be noted that the anxiety related to *Angst der Kreator* has no component of repressed hostility; the forces of nature are understood to be indifferent to individual human existence. Basic anxiety, unlike *Angst der Kreator*, denotes a helplessness which is largely provoked by repressed hostility toward others and includes fear and anger resulting from an anticipated hostility from others.

The child's experience of basic anxiety has definite implications for his or her developing attitudes toward self and others. Basic anxiety engenders feelings of emotional isolation in combination with feelings of intrinsic weakness of the self. It inhibits the development of self-confidence and indicates a potential conflict between the child's desire to rely on his or her parents and the impossibility of seeking comfort, protection and love because of distrust and hostility toward them. To the extent that the young child experiences basic anxiety in the context of early child-parent relations, the child will attempt to allay basic anxiety by adopting one of the three modes of relating to the relative exclusion of the other two. In her conceptualization, Horney (1950) describes three adult neurotic styles moving toward, against and away from others and speculates on what early kinds of parent-child experiences engender each particular mode of neurotic functioning. Horney carefully points out that she is delineating three principal ways an individual in this culture may try to protect the self from basic anxiety and that reliance on a particular style varies on a continuum from less to more rigid as one moves from more to less adaptive.

An individual may attempt to allay basic anxiety by adopting the behavioral style of moving toward people. This style denotes an appeal to love and is based on the premise that "if I always give in to others, they will love me and they will not hurt me." Individuals who utilize this style are described as dependent, insecure, helpless, self-effacing, passive, submissive, fearing success and craving protection. Individuals who rely on moving toward people as a rigid way of relating are labeled self-effacing primarily because they feel they should be able to make everyone love them, and must achieve harmony and love with others no matter what the personal cost. The self-effacing

person who eschews selfishness must comply to the wishes of others and uses self-accusations in viewing problems. Horney speculates that the adult who adopts this style was a child who experienced basic anxiety in a parent-child relationship where self-subordination was the price for affection. The idea of lovable goodness was supposedly endorsed by parents to the point that the feelings of others always took precedence over selfish needs (i.e., the parent loves the child as long as the child complies and does exactly what is expected of it).

Another way an individual may attempt to allay basic anxiety is by adopting the behavioral mode of moving against people. This style denotes an appeal to mastery, and is based on the premise that "if I am big, strong, and can fight, you can't hurt me." Persons who utilize this style are described as aggressive, ambitious, hostile, angry, distrustful of others, demanding, arrogant and tend toward self-aggrandizement. They also tend to blame others for their problems and deny any sense of failure. This style is characterized by hostility and vindictiveness toward others. Horney speculates that in early childhood these individuals give up hope of obtaining affection from parents. Horney also hypothesizes that the style of moving against people is related to having parents who combined neglect with critical derision and humiliation. Consequently, the child learns not to expect affection and, in addition, must defend against being criticized by developing a hard "I'll get you before you get me" attitude toward others.

The third behavior style described by Horney is moving away from others. This style denotes an appeal to freedom and expresses the fundamental belief that "if I withdraw, you can't hurt me." These persons are described as detached, stoic, resigned and hypersensitive to the perceived attempts of others to control or influence them. A low energy level (i.e., aversion to effort, listlessness), passive resistance, and a maintenance of distance from intimate relationships are hallmarks of this style. It is suggested that a mixture of compliance and defiance results in withdrawal. Horney speculates that the person who rigidly adopts the moving away mode experienced an early childhood in which respect for individuality was minimal and any form of rebellion was punished. Inconsistent, moody, egocentric parents are viewed as engendering a basic anxiety which results in the moving away behavioral style.

To recapitulate briefly, Horney's work suggests that the child must learn to develop confidence in self and others in order to realize his or her own unique capacities as well as to adapt to the tasks and stresses of life. In order to facilitate self-realization and coping, the child must learn to appropriately use the three

modes of moving toward, against and away. Depending on the extent to which the child experiences basic anxiety he or she may come to rely on one of the three modes as a characteristic behavior style in an attempt to allay the fear of being alone and abandoned in a hostile world. The particular behavioral style the individual adopts is seen as having its roots in the early parent-child relationship. Horney's work describes in detail the cognitive and affective dynamics of each behavioral style as it characterizes the functioning of adult neurotics. Since her conceptualization is drawn primarily from work with adults, Horney spends relatively little time and can mostly speculate on the early development and manifestation of the three behavior styles in infancy and childhood. It is in the work of attachment theorists that we may obtain information and insight into the manifestation of Horney's three behavior styles in early development.

The work of attachment theorists is based on observations of early infant-parent interaction and examines how the infant-mother affective tie describes the child's functioning and its relations to others. According to the conceptualization of Bowlby (1969), whose theory of attachment is the basis of recent work, attachment describes a species general behavior system selected through evolutionary survival value. The infant caregiver affective bond is grounded in the biological function of protection from predation and involves a history of species specific patterns of social interaction (Bowlby, 1969; Waters and Deane, 1980). Early attachment theory has a definite psychoanalytic as well as ethological component in its focus on the mother-child bond as the primary determinant of future functioning and relationships. The goal of the attachment system is proximity to caregiver and Bowlby asserts that diverse behaviors such as smiling, clinging, signaling, are functionally similar in promoting this goal. More recently, Sroufe and Waters (1977) have suggested that the set goal of the attachment system should be viewed as felt "security" and that the function of the attachment system is not only to provide protection, but to foster exploration of the environment as well. A positive, secure, affective bond between infant and caregiver promotes human adaptation as this bond is the foundation for mastery of the inanimate and social world.

The majority of research conducted on ethological attachment theory is guided by the idea of security of attachment. This concept of security denotes the relative balance between the attachment (proximity comfort seeking) and exploratory behavioral systems (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Sroufe and Waters, 1977). Here it is interesting to note that the attachment system of proximity seeking is related to Horney's conception of the moving toward people mode while the exploratory



system is related to her concept of moving away from people. The child's ability to appropriately use moves toward and moves away from people is thus implicit in the security of attachment definition of adaptive behavior. By the end of the first year of life, the adaptive secure infant-adult attachment relationship emerges and is described by confidence in the availability and responsiveness of one or a few adults and the ability to use these adults as a secure base from which to explore the environment. The security of an attachment relationship is determined by observing caregiver-child interaction and is assessed by examining: (1) the extent to which stress promotes a shift from predominant exploratory to predominant attachment behavior and (2) the extent to which an infant uses its caregiver as a secure base from which to explore the environment.

Ainsworth and her colleagues (1972, 1978) have devised a laboratory procedure known as the strange situation paradigm in order to assess individual differences in security of attachment. This procedure consists of eight episodes and, from the infant's point of view, involves an unfamiliar room with toys, a stranger, and two brief separations from and reunions with the mother. After the infant and mother are introduced into a room with toys, an unfamiliar adult enters and engages the infant in play. Next, two separation-reunion episodes take place; in one of the separations, the infant is left alone in the presence of a stranger and, in the other, the infant is left alone entirely. Derived from the infant's behavior, in particular its ability to be comforted by the parent's presence and its capacity to return to exploration in reunion episodes without becoming withdrawn, angry or petulant, individual differences in the quality of attachment are inferred. These differences are assessed and described in terms of the infant's confidence in the caregiver's availability/responsiveness in contrast to anxious concern and inability to be comforted. With regard to Horney's theory, the strange situation paradigm provides an opportunity to operationalize the concept of basic anxiety. Essentially, the strange situation provides a context in which stress related to being alone and abandoned in an unfamiliar and possibly hostile environment can be created. The more the child reacts to the strange procedure in a way that implies this situation evokes basic anxiety, the more we might expect to see the behavioral styles described by Horney as a means for allaying stress. In fact, research on infants' reactions to the strange procedure reveal individual differences which parallel Horney's description of the adaptive adult in contrast to the three neurotic behavioral styles. Individual differences in behavior style as they relate to the infant's attachment quality, parental behavior and Horney's concep-

tualization are now examined in light of attachment research findings.

According to the work of Ainsworth and others (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Easterbrooks and Lamb, 1979; Sroufe and Waters, 1977), infants who explore the environment and toys during the pre-separation episodes of the strange situation and who greet and/or seek to establish contact with the mother during reunion episodes are classified as having a secure attachment. These infants, labeled type B, are viewed as showing the most adaptive patterns of behavior for the situation. Type B infants show little or no distress in the separation episodes and yet they greet the mother either with smiles, vocalization or physical contact when she returns. These infants explore both the social environment (stranger) and the nonsocial environment (toys, room). Group B infants do not appear to experience basic anxiety stress when the mother departs and are able to flexibly employ the modes of moving toward and away from mother in appropriate circumstances. It is asserted that group B infants have developed confidence in the availability and responsiveness of their caregiver and thus feel secure enough to independently pursue social and exploratory goals. Research suggests that mothers of type B children are rated as accessible, cooperative, accepting and sensitive in their parenting behavior (e.g., Ainsworth et al., 1978; Londerville and Main, 1980; Pastor, 1981). Research also indicates that securely attached infants are more likely as children to exhibit competent, autonomous functioning in terms of both affective involvement and problem solving style. Peer competence, ego strength, curiosity and cognitive competence have all been related to early security of attachment (Main, 1977; Matas et al., 1978; Pastor, 1981; Waters et al., 1979).

Within the B group there exist four subclassifications which vary according to the balance between proximity and exploratory behaviors. B<sub>1</sub> infants show the most exploration and least proximity to mother and B<sub>4</sub> infants show the most proximity and least exploration. Although the B group in general is considered to be the most securely attached and adaptive, the B<sub>4</sub> subgroup may be indicative of a less adaptive behavior style. B<sub>4</sub> infants are described as completely preoccupied with the mother throughout the strange procedure and are said to give an impression of distress and anxiousness. In reunion episodes, these infants cling to the mother and resist release although they show some resistance to mother by drawing back from her or averting the face while being held. B<sub>4</sub> infants seem to exhibit a behavioral pattern that might predispose them to what Horney called the self-effacing moving toward others style. These infants appear to experience a basic anxiety at the mother's departure

for they show crying when the mother leaves and are anxious even when she is present. The fact that these infants are preoccupied with the mother even when stress is low suggests that the moving toward people style has begun to predominate when it is less situationally appropriate. Further, the resistance and anger to mother even in the face of an overall need to cling and hold on indicates that an experience related to the phenomenon of basic anxiety may be operating to constrain the infant's capacity to function in a more positively adaptive and flexible manner.

Here it should be noted that the subgroup B<sub>4</sub> alerts us to the fact that although group B behavior is viewed as the most adaptive, in its extreme form it can represent an individual who is overly compliant. Society in general, and this culture in particular, tends to value the child who obeys rules and does not offer resistance or express anger. Parents, teachers, experimenters, have an easier time with a cooperative child. Thus we must be careful not to endorse a value of compliance over self-assertiveness or appropriate resistance in defining the quality of adaptation or attachment. In fact, it is interesting to note that the strange situation allows moves toward and away in the service of adaptive functioning while moves against are not seen as appropriate responses in this procedure. A means for measuring appropriate use of the moves against mode would be useful for obtaining a more complete picture of the adaptive child.

Examination of infant's behaviors in the strange procedure indicates that another group of infants can be identified as having what is labeled an anxious-resistant attachment to mother. These infants are labeled group C and are viewed as markedly ambivalent in their reaction to their mother. While group C children seek contact with mother, they are also conspicuously contact-resisting and angry during the strange procedure. These infants are not likely to engage in extensive exploration of the setting during pre-separation from mother and are often upset during the initial episode. Group C children also appear to be less competent in problem solving situations (Matas, 1977) and this may be related to their reluctance to use the move away mode in order to explore the environment. C infants are typically very distressed by separation from mother and tend to seek contact with mother during reunion but are not comforted by contact. They may be passive in the procedure, showing little exploratory activity and signaling a desire for contact with mother by gesturing or crying rather than by actively seeking contact by approaching the mother. When the infant does achieve proximal contact with mother, he or she frequently strains against her when held and may often push or throw away toys she offers. Angry resistant behavior is likely to be

shown toward the stranger as well as toward the mother. Considering the C infants' distress during the strange procedure and their expression of resistance to mother and stranger, it appears as if these children exhibit a behavioral pattern that may predispose them to what Horney called the moving against behavior style. In fact, observation of toddlers who had been previously classified as C infants at 18 months were noted to be most negative and least responsive to both mother and peers at 22 months of age (Pastor, 1981). C infants have been characterized as angry, ambivalent, as well as passive-aggressive, depending on the extent to which pre-separation episodes are marked by anger or passivity (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The distress shown by C infants in the strange procedure suggests that they experience a basic anxiety and that they respond to this stress with a behavior pattern that could be described as a moving against behavioral mode. Evidence that these infants show more negative behavior to strangers and peers as well as mother suggests that they have begun to employ the moving against behavior style in interpersonal relations at the expense of the moving toward or away modes when they are appropriate.

Group C children who appear to react to stress with a moving against mode of relating may be experiencing basic anxiety which in part may be engendered by a neglecting mothering style. Research suggests mothers of group C infants delay in responding to cry signals, occupy the time when holding the baby with routines, infrequently show affectionate behavior during contact and are generally inept in handling the baby during close physical contact (Ainsworth et al., 1978). In addition, mothers of C children have been rated as inaccessible, interfering and neglecting of the child although they are not perceived as rejecting (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Egeland and Sroufe, 1981). The maternal pattern of neglect and lack of affection are two qualities of parent-child relations that Horney speculated were related to the child's development of the moving against behavioral style.

Classification of infant reaction to the strange situation has also resulted in the identification of a group of infants described as avoidant. These infants, labeled group A, show conspicuous avoidance of proximity to or interaction with mothers in reunion episodes. If there is an approach, the baby tends to combine welcome with avoidance responses by turning away, averting gaze or moving past the mother. The clearest avoidance response is continued ignoring of the mother despite her efforts to coax the baby to come to her or play with her. Research indicates that A infants show little distress and cry infrequently during the strange situation while, in contrast, at home they show frequent separation distress (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Although the A group does not show overt distress during separation or reunion episodes of the strange situation, these infants exhibit heart rate acceleration in both separation and reunion episodes (Sroufe and Waters, 1977). This suggests that A infants experience distress but do not express it in crying or approach to mother. The tendency of group A infants to maintain exploration of the environment (while ignoring mother) at a relatively high level across separation and reunion episodes has been interpreted as displacement behavior (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Considering group A behavior in the laboratory and home, it appears that these infants show a behavior pattern similar to the one Horney identified as the moving away behavioral style. Group A infants appear to lack confidence in their mothers' responsiveness and accessibility and exhibit an anxious attachment relationship in which avoidance predominates over approach.

The avoidant behavior pattern shown by group A infants which so closely resembles Horney's moving away behavior style appears to be related to a mother-child relationship characterized by rejection and insensitivity to infant care. Group A mothers tend to more frequently rebuff infant desire for close bodily contact and to be more often angry and irritated by their babies. These mothers are described as characteristically rigid and compulsive. It is suggested that these traits predispose the mother to anger when the baby's demands interrupt her ongoing activity or when the baby does not immediately comply with her wishes (Ainsworth et al., 1978). This description of the A infant mother is consistent with Horney's suggestion that the moving away behavioral style has its roots in a childhood characterized by a moody egocentric parent who has little respect for the child's needs or individuality.

Horney's conceptualization suggests that the quality of the early mother-infant attachment relationship may predispose an individual toward adopting a behavioral style that inhibits the development of unique capacities and leaves the person less flexible in dealing with stress. In general, it has been argued that certain maternal styles may engender certain types of attachments and adult behavioral styles. While the mother as the determinant of the child's adaptive style has been emphasized, a focus employed by Horney as well as attachment researchers, the data currently available on this assumption are correlational and thus bidirectional in nature. Consequently, certain types of children may preclude certain mothering styles and it is probably the case that, to varying degrees, both mother and child influence outcomes.

The similarity between Horney's description of adults and the attachment theorists' description of young children in regard to characteristic patterns of

coping with basic anxiety or stress seems evident. As presented here, these conceptualizations complement and validate each other, broadening our perspective on the etiology, dynamics, and manifestations of less adaptive coping styles from infancy to adulthood. Further, the behavior styles of Horney and attachment theorists may represent analogous processes (Werner, 1948). That is, the tendency of the individual to deal with stress may be manifested in three basic ways that are analogous from infancy through adulthood although structurally different in behavior at different ages. Epistemologically the view has been taken that the emergence of similar organizational systems from different disciplines reflects the reality of certain behavioral styles more than a shared cognitive belief about development and adaptation on the part of social scientists.

Clinically, the work of attachment theorists and Horney considered together suggests that use of infant's reaction in the strange situation may be employed as an assessment tool to identify less adaptive coping styles at an early point in development. Early intervention in the parent-child relationship might then be instrumental in preventing less effective behavior patterns noted in the strange situation from becoming the more rigid behavioral styles described by Horney in adults. Research does suggest that the infant's early attachment style is predictive of later adaptation, at least in childhood. Waters et al. (1979) found secure infants as compared to insecure infants showed more peer competence and ego strength at 3½ years of age. Similarly, Arend et al. (1979) found that secure infants were more ego resilient and curious at 5 years. Findings from studies on middle and lower class infants show that the distribution of infants in the categories of B<sub>4</sub> (move toward), C (move against), and A (move away) are approximately 5%, 10%, and 20%, respectively, with 65% of infants exhibiting the more secure, adaptive attachment (Abbe, 1979; Ainsworth et al., 1978). Although based on a small restricted sample size, these results suggest that, while the majority of infants are not at risk for developing a particular behavior style in childhood, a substantial minority of children may have begun to show behavior patterns that may predispose them to be less flexible in coping with everyday situations, tasks and stress.

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