



WHY DO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT FAIL? NEO-FREUDIANISM AS A CASE STUDY IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

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A full account of the social production of knowledge requires an understanding of how schools of thought fail, as well as succeed. This paper offers a sociology of knowledge analysis of the collapse of neo-Freudianism as a separate school of psychoanalysis and influential intellectual current. While the existing literature stresses personal conflicts between Karen Horney, Erich Fromm and Harry Stack Sullivan as a major cause of the failure of cultural psychoanalysis, my analysis highlights the sect-like nature of Freudian institutes, the professionalizing dynamics of American psychoanalysis, the contribution of the celebrity-dominated book market and culture, and the highly controversial nature of Erich Fromm's writings and intellectual activity. Neo-Freudianism is conceptualized as a hybrid system that is a combination of a literary phenomena, intellectual movement, faction of a sect, theoretical innovation and therapy. This analysis of hybrid intellectual systems raises larger sociology of knowledge questions about schools of thought and intellectual movements. © 1998 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

There is a rich but incomplete historical and sociological literature on the formation and diffusion of schools of thought. The major gap in this "whiggish" literature is that we know an immense amount about the history of successful schools of thought but very little about the sociological dynamics that give rise to the failure of intellectual perspectives. Since the victors in the struggles for intellectual legitimation write the histories, there is a need to examine case studies of schools of thought that fail to establish their legitimacy.¹ A full account of the social production of knowledge requires an understanding of how the emergence of schools of thought shape both how one becomes a dominant scholar and how one becomes a forgotten intellectual.²

As a contribution to this larger project, this paper offers an analysis of the collapse of neo-Freudianism as a separate school of psychoanalysis and an influential intellectual current. Neo-Freudianism, often called the cultural school of psychoanalysis, was enormously influential in the mental health professions, in the social sciences, and in the broader intellectual culture of the United States from the early 1930s until the late 1950s.³ But from the late 1950s onward, attacks from members of the orthodox psychoanalytic establishment increasingly isolated cultural psychoanalysis.⁴ Despite the fact that neo-Freudian insights diffused widely into Western and especially American culture, and that small pockets of neo-Freudians continued to exert influence through institutions, cultural psychoanalysis did not exist by the 1980s as a school of thought comparable to, for example, object relations, ego psychology, or Lacanian psychoanalysis. While social scientists or humanities scholars interested in psychoanalytic insights were often drawn to object relations, Kleinian psychoanalysis, the Frankfurt School, or Lacanianism, few scholars at the end of the twentieth century show the interest in neo-Freudianism that was so widespread in the 1950s. Nor in the 1990s did neo-Freudianism have a presence in intellectual culture among readers of public intellectual books or

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opinion journals as was this case with, for example, humanistic psychology, existentialist psychology, and Lacanian psychoanalysis.⁵

How did this remarkable decline come to pass? This paper is not a contribution to the history of neo-Freudianism that should be written, nor does it add new primary research into the careers and lives of the major individuals within cultural psychoanalysis.⁶ Instead, it offers a sociologically informed account of the decline of neo-Freudianism based on available accounts, adding an analytic framework that illuminates the failure of neo-Freudianism outside the personalistic theoretical orientation that has dominated the historiography on the topic. Implicit in much of the literature on cultural psychoanalysis is the assumption that the collapse of this school of thought could be explained largely by personal conflicts between the major players, particularly Erich Fromm (1900–1980), Karen Horney (1885–1952), and Harry Stack Sullivan (1892–1949).⁷ In contrast, I argue that there was a sociological instability inherent in neo-Freudianism deriving from the intellectual orientations and career trajectories of the major members of the emergent school. This instability flowed from both sociological factors and the specific history of the particular members of the neo-Freudian school.

An understanding of the sociological factors that explain the instability of neo-Freudianism requires a broader perspective than much of the sociology of knowledge literature gives us. Historical and sociological accounts of schools of thought provide numerous insights into the legitimation and diffusion of research agendas in particular academic disciplines in the social and natural sciences as well as in the humanities.⁸ Insufficient attention has been paid, however, to understanding schools of thought that emerge in interdisciplinary contexts and in interaction with audiences outside university settings.⁹ This paper will argue that both the remarkable success and the rapid decline of neo-Freudianism can be adequately understood only with an analysis that highlights the sociological dynamics set in motion by the interaction of an intellectual sect (Freudianism), emerging profession (modern American psychoanalysis and social science), and the mass market for intellectual products that is new to the twentieth century.¹⁰ There is much literature on the professionalization of academic disciplines, but the role of intellectual sects and celebrity culture are sociological factors that have been inadequately theorized.¹¹ The complex interaction between intellectual sects, movements, modern professionalization, and celebrity culture must be central to a sociology and history of twentieth century schools of thought.

The rise and decline of neo-Freudianism provides a case study that illuminates these larger issues. First, unlike most unsuccessful schools of thought, the decline of neo-Freudianism has not gone along with the disappearance of their ideas from the relevant intellectual areas. Cultural psychoanalysis is not merely of historical interest within contemporary Freudian thought. While neo-Freudians lost the battle for legitimation as a separate school of thought, they won the major intellectual wars in which they were engaged within psychoanalysis. Few contemporary psychoanalysts defend the orthodox libido theory that was the major object of criticism by Horney, Sullivan and Fromm. Contemporary Freudian thought is dominated by the concern with gender and the mother pioneered by Horney, the focus on interpersonal dynamics articulated by Sullivan, and the historical, sociological and cultural factors introduced earlier by Fromm, Horney and Sullivan. The fact that many neo-Freudian ideas were very much in the mainstream of psychoanalytic thought in the 1990s and that major tenets of neo-Freudianism have diffused widely throughout modern culture and contemporary academic social science suggests the need for a sociological analysis.¹²

This analysis must go beyond the existing literature, however, because neo-Freudianism had many of the major characteristics that scholars have identified as being central to the emergence of a successful school of thought.¹³ Neo-Freudians were led by charismatic indi-



viduals who had access to institutional resources and networks, and they recruited enthusiastic followers loyal to the cause. Neo-Freudians produced their own psychoanalytic institutes and journals, and there are numerous historians of the Freudian movement as well as contemporary writers, theorists, academics, and therapists who could be placed broadly within the general camp of cultural psychoanalysis. In the 1950s and 1960s, there was space for revisionist psychoanalytic theories within the American mental health professions, and there remains even today a market for revisionist psychoanalytic ideas within academic social science as well as an audience for popular books and elite intellectual social criticism.

The central early founders of neo-Freudianism may not have had the kind of loyalty to the school necessary for the kind of social cohesion and *esprit de corps* that scholars have argued is central to the emergence of a school of thought.¹⁴ Yet there is much scholarly discussion in the sociology of knowledge that suggests that cohesiveness and loyalty is often a socially constructed origin myth created after the fact to legitimate a school of thought.¹⁵ Even if there were too many personal and intellectual differences between Horney, Sullivan and Fromm to allow them to work together closely to establish neo-Freudianism, there is no obvious explanation for why later followers did not emerge committed to forging a usable history of cultural psychoanalysis that would help legitimate contemporary work under the banner of neo-Freudianism. The existing literature on schools of thought is not adequate for understanding the failure of neo-Freudianism, since most of the investigation has focused on research teams housed largely in universities. Neo-Freudianism, in contrast, was not an academic school of thought at all but was a unique blend of professional therapy, social science theory, intellectual movement, and literary phenomena.

Neo-Freudianism thus allows us to examine the factors that help create schools of thought that cross the boundaries of single academic disciplines and professions. Neo-Freudianism was not a traditional school of thought created by academics nor by psychology clinicians but was instead forged by professional therapists who were originally associated with the intellectual sect of psychoanalysis and who wrote both for an audience of general readers (Fromm and Horney) and for professionals in fields outside the mental health professions (Fromm and Sullivan). Neo-Freudianism thus bridged the boundaries between clinical therapeutic practice and writing, general intellectual and cultural analysis, and academic social science. This unique sociological nature of neo-Freudianism as an intellectual movement helped create a large audience for the school but also doomed the legitimation of the school within the mental health professions, intellectual culture, and academic social science. Understanding this process raises larger questions about the many intellectual movements so important to our intellectual life.

My emphasis on these broader sociological factors does not suggest that individual biography or historical contingencies should be ignored as is sometimes the case in contemporary sociology of knowledge literature.¹⁶ The decline of cultural psychoanalysis can be understood only by a close analysis of the lives and even the deaths of the individuals involved in the formation of the school. Fromm (1900–1980) lived to the eve of his 80th birthday while both Horney (1885–1952) and Sullivan (1892–1949) died relatively young. It is my contention that if Fromm had died in the 1950s and if Horney and Sullivan had lived into the 1960s, neo-Freudianism might have survived successfully as a school of thought. Since only Fromm lived and wrote during the period of decline, the story of the decline of cultural psychoanalysis has to be told with a special focus on a sociological analysis of Fromm's controversial place in twentieth-century American intellectual history.

In my view, Fromm's sociologically-created visibility and fame foreordained the demise of neo-Freudianism toward the end of the century despite the continuing intellectual and



institutional impact of cultural psychoanalysis. While orthodox Freudians were opposed to Horney's and Sullivan's revisions of psychoanalytic theory, Fromm was hated within the Freudian establishment with a special passion. For reasons that will be outlined in this paper, the fact that Fromm was a unique combination of Freudian revisionist, Marxist social critic, and popular writer contributed to a hostility to neo-Freudianism among orthodox psychoanalysis that played a central role in the decline of the school. While the insights of neo-Freudianism were gradually accepted back into the psychoanalytic fold largely as the "interpersonal psychoanalysis" associated with Sullivan or the proto-feminist psychoanalysis of Horney, Fromm remains far more marginal to contemporary Freudian thought despite the glaring similarities between his thought and many recent developments.¹⁷

The different receptions of Fromm, Sullivan, and Horney suggest further insights into the general sociological dynamics of intellectual legitimacy as well as the specific case of the decline of cultural psychoanalysis. And Fromm's reputation cannot be understood simply by looking at the nature of his ideas or by stressing his often difficult personality.¹⁸ Instead, an understanding of the rise and fall of both Erich Fromm and neo-Freudianism more generally requires an analysis of the unique interaction of the sect-like culture of psychoanalysis, the professionalizing needs of therapists and social scientists in mid-century America, and the sociological dynamics set in motion by the increasing role of intellectual fame in American cultural life beginning in the post-World War II period.¹⁹ But first we must begin with the basic story.

NEO-FREUDIANISM

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the German psychoanalysts, Karen Horney and Erich Fromm, and the American psychiatrist, Harry Stack Sullivan, were widely known as the leading proponents of the "cultural" or neo-Freudian school of psychoanalysis.²⁰ Although the intellectual differences between Fromm, Horney, and Sullivan suggest that this label is misleading, they shared a number of important criticisms of Freudian orthodoxy. All three were skeptical of the usefulness of what they perceived as the orthodox Freudian insistence on instinct theory. Horney insisted that cultural values and norms had a powerful influence on standards of mental health and definitions of neurosis. Sullivan captured this point clearly with his stress on "interpersonal relations." Fromm, Horney, and Sullivan all downplayed the importance of instincts, arguing that the individual search for identity, self-esteem and secure relations with others in work, family and the broader society should be the central focus of psychoanalytic theory. The consequence of this perspective was a stress on sociological, not biological, factors, a major break with both classical Freudian theory and the increasingly medically oriented American psychoanalytic establishment. There were important differences of emphasis between Horney, Sullivan, and Fromm, but the outlines of their critique of orthodox Freudian libido theory is clear.

Horney, Sullivan, and Fromm also shared a certain skepticism towards the way in which some of Freud's own cultural values and perspectives shaped his theories. Horney, in particular, was a pioneer in developing an early feminist critique of the patriarchal bias embedded in Freud's theories of the Oedipal complex and penis envy.²¹ Sullivan, while certainly not a political radical, was a proponent of theories that looked for the social roots of schizophrenia, and he was also an early critic of the labelling that often constructs deviance and delinquency. Neither Horney nor Sullivan would accept Fromm's somewhat Marxist critique of modern society, but they shared for a while a common interest in opening up the insights of Freudian ideas to a broader set of theoretical influences. Horney's psychoanalysis drew on cultural



anthropology and the sociology of her German acquaintance, Georg Simmel.²² Sullivan's very American psychology was partly based on the theories of the self developed by University of Chicago philosopher George Herbert Mead.²³ And Fromm contributed his Marxist and Weberian training and his involvement in the early development of Frankfurt School critical theory to this exciting mix of ideas.²⁴

FROMM AND HORNEY'S COLLABORATION

These three major neo-Freudians came together not as separate individuals but, rather, Horney and Fromm collaborated first and then together they developed a working relationship with Sullivan. Horney and Fromm had met initially at the Berlin Institute for Psychoanalysis. In the 1920s and the early 1930s, the Berlin Institute was the most intellectually exciting center of psychoanalysis in Europe.²⁵ Horney was a founding member and an important figure in the intellectual life and training of the Berlin Institute. Although Berlin was an orthodox institute that treated Freud's writings as quasi-scriptural, it was remarkably vibrant and open. The first generation of German Freudian enthusiasts trained a dedicated cadre of psychoanalysts schooled with a unique blend of clinical and humanistic education (Harris and Brock 1991). Associated with the cultural radicalism of the Weimar period, the Berlin institute fostered a movement, not a professional culture (Jacoby 1983). Berlin provided inexpensive treatment to German workers and the middle classes and functioned to educate social workers, teachers, political activists, and nurses in psychotherapy.²⁶

Fifteen years younger than Horney, Fromm was trained at the Berlin Institute, where he was influenced by the renegade Freudian-Marxist Wilhelm Reich and for a time was part of a circle of radical psychoanalysts led by Otto Fenichel. Although Fromm would soon fall out with both Reich and the psychoanalytically orthodox but politically radical Fenichel, Fromm's work was shaped by these early attempts to combine Freudian depth psychology with Marxist historical materialism and with Horney's early critiques of Freudian orthodoxy from a proto-feminist and cultural perspective. Fromm remained a relatively orthodox Freud-Marxist until the late 1930s, several years after he had emigrated to the United States.²⁷

Fromm initially came to the United States at the invitation of Horney, who attempted to secure a position for him at Franz Alexander's Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis after she had moved there in the early 1930s to be associate director. Her scheme fell through because Alexander objected to Fromm's status as an analyst without a medical degree.²⁸

Lay analysis was widely accepted among the first two generations of European psychoanalysts, and some of the most important of Freud's followers in Europe did not have medical degrees. The master himself had written an essay defending the practice of "lay analysis." Freud, had after all been rejected by the European medical establishment, even though he held a medical degree. Freud's vision of what psychoanalysis could be was in fact much broader and more ambitious than a subfield within medical psychiatry. Several important followers (including his daughter Anna) were not physicians. Most American psychoanalysts, however, wanted to increase the professional status of psychoanalysis by establishing it as a specialty in psychiatric medicine. European psychoanalysts who emigrated to the United States without medical degrees often suffered rejection at the hands of American psychoanalysts because of this emerging professionalization strategy among American Freudians.²⁹ Unlike many other European psychoanalysts, however, Fromm had other options and moved to New York City to his position as a tenured member of the Frankfurt School for Social Research now based at Columbia University, at the same time establishing a private practice



in the city. Horney herself found the Chicago Institute stifling, and she soon also relocated in New York, joining the New York Psychoanalytic Institute.³⁰

Fromm and Horney were collaborators as well as lovers, and together they established contacts with a number of anthropologists, sociologists, psychoanalysts, and psychiatrists who were interested in merging revised Freudian insights with the social sciences as part of an emerging concern with "culture and personality."³¹ Both Horney and Fromm participated in Sullivan's eclectic Zodiac Club, an informal network of like-minded psychoanalysts and social scientists. Through this network, Horney and Fromm got to know anthropologists Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Ralph Linton. Neo-Freudianism emerged out of this exciting mix of ideas.³²

While Fromm's work with Horney and Sullivan helped develop a critique of Freudian orthodoxy, Fromm failed to establish a solid alternative institutional home for his particular brand of unorthodox Freudian analysis. While the reputation of all three thinkers suffered from the hostility directed at them by dogmatic Freudians, Horney and Sullivan, especially, were able to develop far more secure institutional support in America. Horney later established her own institute, and Sullivan was a central figure and had many loyal followers in both the Washington School of Psychiatry and the William Alanson White Institute.³³ Fromm had established the Mexican Psychoanalytic Institute after moving there in the early 1950s and thus has a wide and loyal following in Latin America, but he had far fewer supporters and many more enemies within unorthodox psychoanalytic institutes in America than did Horney and Sullivan. Fromm's critique of dogmatic psychoanalytic ideas were thus particularly vulnerable to attack from the defenders of the Freudian orthodoxy.

Conflicts among Horney, Sullivan, and Fromm are central to this story. Horney and Fromm had become romantically involved in the early 1930s, and the breakup of their relationship caused bitterness, particularly on Horney's part. The breakup of the relationship is a complex story that Quinn and Paris have told in more detail, but one contributing factor was that Karen Horney had asked Fromm to take her daughter into analysis. Fromm agreed and preceded to help free Marriane Horney to see her conflicts with her mother in a new light. Marriane Horney gained the confidence to stand up to her mother, and Fromm and Karen Horney's relationship went into decline. For all of the psychoanalytic insights that Fromm brought, he shared with other early psychoanalysts a remarkable blindness to the obvious psychological and sociological conflicts embedded in analyzing one's lover's daughter. And, there were deeper causes to their problems, a topic about which later writers have speculated.³⁴

Sullivan's and Fromm's relationship had always been somewhat strained, even if Sullivan's early death prevented a open break. Contrary to the focus in much of the literature, however, the major difference between Fromm and Sullivan was not personal or related to Freudian theory but was instead rooted in politics.³⁵ Fromm's *The Sane Society* (1955) contained an extended criticism of the political implications of Sullivan's thought, a posthumous attack that permanently damaged Fromm's standing among the followers of Sullivan's "interpersonal psychoanalysis." Fromm took time out from a book-length Marxist humanist critique of modern capitalist societies to argue that although Sullivan was "one of the most profound and brilliant psychoanalysts of our period," his "theoretical concepts" were marred by the "all pervasive alienation" of modern society. Just as Freud had "taken the competitiveness characteristic of the beginning of the century as a natural phenomena," Sullivan "took the fact that the alienated person lacks a feeling of selfhood and experiences himself in terms of a response to the expectations of others, as part of human nature." Sullivan's view



of human nature was, according to Fromm, largely a reflection of the “alienated, marketing personality of the twentieth century.”³⁶

It was this critique, in a book that made *The New York Times Book Review* best-sellers’ list, that drove a wedge between Fromm and many of Sullivan’s followers, as can be seen most dramatically in the reaction of Patrick Mullahy. Mullahy, a disciple of Sullivan and a faculty member at the William Alanson White Institute, had been a major supporter of Fromm’s early work, writing a glowing review of *Escape from Freedom in Psychiatry* and including a very positive account of Fromm’s theories in his influential book *Oedipus: Myth and Complex* (1948).³⁷ Mullahy responded to the publication of *The Sane Society*, however, with a sharply critical review in *Psychiatry*, organized around the theme that Fromm had rejected empirical science for speculative philosophical anthropology. And while Fromm’s critique of Sullivan was a brief detour in a book that was about modern society not contemporary psychiatry, Mullahy’s review spent several pages defending Sullivan. For Mullahy, “Fromm’s concept of the alienated personality is loaded by his own moral preferences,” and while Sullivan’s psychiatric theories were grounded in clinical research and empirical science, Fromm’s writings on the self were essentially “vague or general and unsupported statements about human potentialities.” Ending his review with a dissent from the “dogmatism” of “inspired reformists,” Mullahy argued that the implementation of Fromm’s political program would likely lead to the “destruction of individual responsibility” by “a shrewd manipulation of power, of emotionalized sentiment, or, more often, both.”³⁸ Fromm had lost an ally within psychoanalysis, for political as well as intellectual reasons.

The most important differences between Horney, Sullivan, and Fromm were not primarily personal but were essentially rooted in political differences that had important sociological implications. Fromm was too Marxist for Horney and certainly for Sullivan. While Fromm was a committed professional therapist, he was far more concerned with reforming the world through radical political activity and social criticism than he was establishing a school of psychoanalysis, either neo-Freudian or Frommian.³⁹

Both Horney and Sullivan were far more focused than Fromm on the internal politics of psychoanalysis and the mental health professions. And Horney wrote for a general not radical audience, while Sullivan was concerned with having political influence on elite policy makers and was thus very critical of those on the radical fringe of American politics. Partly because of internal conflicts and differences among neo-Freudians, Fromm could count on little support from the intellectual followers of Horney or Sullivan. The sociological instability of neo-Freudianism thus has deeper roots than personality conflicts between the major participants; indeed the personality conflicts may have been, at some level, rooted in more fundamental differences and sociological dynamics. The breakup of neo-Freudianism as a potential school of psychoanalysis, and Fromm’s special contribution to the whole process, must be understood in the context of the sociological literature on psychoanalytic institutions in mid-century America as well as by highlighting the importance of public intellectual life and celebrity culture.⁴⁰

FROM SECT TO PROFESSION

The decline of neo-Freudianism as a school of thought can be understood only if one recognizes that psychoanalysis was a unique blend of sect and profession.⁴¹ Horney, Fromm, and Sullivan worked closely together in the decade of the 1930s, a pivotal moment in the professionalization of American psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis in America in the 1930s had



moved beyond being an isolated sect but was not yet an established profession. The reason that the existing literature is inadequate for understanding what happened to neo-Freudianism is that most academic researchers assume that schools of thought compete with other schools of thought for legitimacy. In the case of neo-Freudianism, however, we are dealing with an intellectual perspective that was struggling for legitimacy against dedicated sect members who were simultaneously attempting to maintain the purity of their ideas and to establish themselves as an elite cadre in the American mental health professions.

The expansion of Freud's sect into an established place in American psychiatry plays a central role in helping explain both the rise and fall of neo-Freudianism. Although Freud's theories had support among a number of prominent American psychiatrists and intellectuals in the early part of the twentieth century, his reputation among members of the American medical profession remained precarious throughout the 1930s. Yet the future looked promising. The stature of Freud's movement was still reaping the benefit of the widespread use of psychoanalytic techniques to treat shell shock victims in World War I. And the intellectual capital of the Freudian movement was increased by the scores of creative European psychoanalysts who came to America in the wake of the rise of Nazism.⁴²

Freud's American followers in 1930s faced two major liabilities that hampered their efforts to professionalize fully. First, much of the early popularization of psychoanalysis in America had been undertaken not by trained psychoanalysts but by bohemian cultural radicals, intellectuals, and journalists. Throughout the early part of the 20th century, such literary and political intellectuals as John Reed, Emma Goldman, Eugene O'Neill, and Floyd Dell promoted psychoanalysis in the bohemian enclaves of Chicago and New York. Coverage of psychoanalysis had extended to mass magazines and books by 1915 and peaked by the 1920s. While psychoanalytic professionals were concerned with establishing the medical stature of their profession, radical intellectuals were describing themselves, as Nathan Hale puts it, as "disinterested devotees of art, revolution and psychoanalysis."⁴³

The most notorious of the psychoanalytic popularizers of the 1920s had been Andre Tridon, a protégé of the radical, Emma Goldman. Tridon, a French immigrant, wrote best-selling books that promoted a simplistic and eclectic version of psychoanalysis that stressed free love, libertarianism, cultural relativism and socialism. Tridon was the "enfant terrible" of Freudians and "bane of the serious medical analysts." Hale suggests that the case of Tridon helps explain why Freudian psychiatrists took steps in the 1930s to ensure that "no layman could become a psychoanalyst." Concerned with establishing psychoanalysis as a prestigious profession aligned with medicine, American Freudian physicians were "particularly sensitive to charges of quackery and to lay encroachment in any area of treatment regarded as a medical specialty."⁴⁴

This fear of psychoanalytic popularizers and quacks was aggravated by an institutional problem. Freudians had not yet developed systematic training institutes to legitimate their work within the medical profession and with the public at large as well as to establish the autonomy of their training and theory.⁴⁵ Psychoanalysts in the 1930s were motivated by what Hale calls a "newly minted professionalism and scientism" and began an intensive internal struggle to control the training and licensing of their practitioners.

There were many obstacles in the way of this process of professionalization. The European analysts in America had been trained in a theoretically intense culture in which power and status often flowed from one's direct relationship to Freud's inner circle.⁴⁶ Moreover, the Freudian institutes had trained a couple of generations of European psychoanalysts, many of whom, as noted above, did not have medical degrees. Freud wanted psychoanalysis to develop as a theoretically distinct movement and discipline that was not simply incorporated into



eclectic medical psychiatry or academic psychology. As a consequence, many of Freud's more loyal followers in America were as worried about fighting eclecticism and revisions of classical doctrines as concerned with gaining medical acceptance.⁴⁷

Americans psychoanalysts understood that this internal sect-like culture was a liability in an American medical profession that looked to scientific methods, not European intellectual stature, for legitimacy. The fact that eclectic psychoanalysis increasingly had a strong base in American psychiatry and psychotherapy created further tensions within Freudian circles. The willingness of many American psychiatrists and psychotherapists to adopt elements of the Freudian system opened opportunities for ambitious analysts. Yet organized psychoanalysis was also threatened by eclecticism, for the watering down and absorption of their theory undermined their attempts to establish themselves as a theoretically coherent elite within psychiatry. There was an inevitable conflict emerging between non-medical European analysts concerned with the purity of Freudian theory and Americans concerned with institutionalizing the movement.⁴⁸

These tensions gave rise to what Ernest Jones called the "American psychoanalytic civil wars" from 1931 to 1938 and 1939–1942. Throughout this period psychoanalysts fought intense and bitter internal battles, purging their ranks of lay analysts in order to gain acceptance within the American medical establishment. Alongside this struggle over medical status, American psychoanalysts were also fighting an intense internal war over the neo-Freudian challenge to the place of Freud's libido and Oedipal complex theories within the training process of the institutes. The psychoanalytic civil wars combined fights over formal credentials, theoretical purity, loyalty to Freud, and generational dynamics.

FROMM'S ALLIANCE WITH SULLIVAN AND HORNEY

Fromm's role in the isolation of neo-Freudianism was intimately tied up with these professionalizing dynamics and the ideological struggle over the purity of Freudian ideas. Fromm was one of a relatively large number of European lay analysts who faced hostility in America, but this factor was magnified by the fact that he had increasingly become a critic of orthodox Freudian theory. Many European psychoanalysts faced career problems in America because of their lack of medical credentials, but they at least retained ties to the inner circle of Freudian orthodoxy. Fromm was an enemy of both the European theoretical purists and the American professionalizers, and thus he became a lightning rod for attacks.⁵⁰

Fromm's relationship with Sullivan and Horney throughout the 1930s simultaneously implicated him in and isolated him from these raging psychoanalytic civil wars. Working with Sullivan raised questions about Fromm's loyalty to psychoanalysis. Sullivan did not have formal psychoanalytic training and was extremely eclectic and "contemptuous of orthodoxy."⁵¹ Yet Sullivan was older and far more established, and he helped Fromm develop ties with American scholars and intellectual traditions as well as more eclectic psychoanalytic networks. These multiple ties to psychoanalysts and social scientists in turn played an important role in Fromm's developing a revision of psychoanalysis. Without sources of intellectual and material support outside psychoanalytic institutes and networks, it would have been far more difficult for Fromm to elucidate his criticisms of Freudian orthodoxy so uncompromisingly.

Horney was an even more important intellectual ally for Fromm in the 1920s and 1930s, although association with her also brought liabilities. Horney's medical degree and founding membership in the Berlin Institute gave her impeccable psychoanalytic credentials. Yet at the time, many orthodox Freudians saw her as a "presumptuous woman" for attacking Freud's



theories, and she was increasingly under pressure to moderate her criticisms. The New York Psychoanalytic Institute, in particular, was a bastion of orthodoxy, and proponents of classical theory there attempted to marginalize Horney throughout the 1930s when she refused to back down from her challenges to Freudian orthodoxy.⁵²

Horney's conflict with the Freudian sect was also intimately related to the growth of an educated middle-class market for therapeutic ideas and emergence of what Lewis Coser once called "celebrity intellectuals."⁵³ Orthodox discomfort with Horney turned to anger when she became famous within broader intellectual circles with her books, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (1937) and, especially, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (1939). These books helped create a new awareness among clinicians regarding the cultural factors that influence mental health, and *New Ways*, in particular, was a sharp and influential critique of classical theory.⁵⁴ Horney's success threatened orthodox Freudians within the New York Institute because Horney's minor celebrity status drew loyal students to her and made the maintenance of psychoanalytic orthodoxy more difficult. Although Horney's move from Chicago to Manhattan had benefitted her publishing career, her popular success now isolated within her profession. At the same time, however, Horney's books, as well as Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* (1934) and Margaret Mead's popular writings, created intellectual space for neo-Freudianism, further threatening orthodox Freudians.

The most prominent and creative neo-Freudians were brought together institutionally when Horney was essentially purged from the New York Psychoanalytic Association in 1941.⁵⁵ The ongoing tensions between Horney and orthodox Freudians over psychoanalytic theory had finally come to a head, aggravated by Horney's growing fame and the increasingly militant indignation of several European defenders of Freud's ideas. Horney was demoted from instructor to lecturer, a major professional insult that forced her resignation. Several allies resigned with her and denounced the dogmatism of Freudian orthodoxy as well as what they saw as the anti-democratic nature of the New York Institute. Together Horney and her allies formed the Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis (AAP) and the American Institute for Psychoanalysis, eclectic and open neo-Freudian versions of the orthodox national organization and training institute. Fromm and Sullivan were invited to join the AAF as honorary members.⁵⁶

This arrangement was unstable, however, and the Horney, Sullivan and Fromm alliance unraveled in the wake of an important California court case and a series of personal conflicts. Fromm was allowed to train and supervise psychoanalytic candidates at the American Institute for Psychoanalysis, but his non-medical status still disqualified him from teaching analytic technique, a central component of professional training. This issue of lay analysis was, of course, the longstanding issue of contention, but the politics of psychoanalysis at the time made it almost inevitable that the American Institute for Psychoanalysis would attempt to keep Fromm marginal. As Hale tells the story, in 1941, Earl Warren, then the California attorney general, ruled for the State board of medical examiners that lay analysis violated California law. This major threat to the practice of lay analysis reinforced the vulnerability of Horney's Institute as it attempted to win recognition from the national orthodox American Psychoanalytic Association. Moreover, several important members of Horney's Institute insisted on excluding lay analysts from full participation because they did not want to jeopardize a possible merger with the Columbia Medical School.⁵⁷

At the same time, the massive popular success and critical acclaim that Fromm received with *Escape from Freedom* (1941) aggravated his dissatisfaction with his relative marginality in the professional life of the institute and created new excitement about his work among psychoanalytic students. Horney increasingly became envious of Fromm's new found fam-



and threatened by his competition, a conflict no doubt made worse by the bitter aftermath of the break up of their romantic relationship.⁵⁶ This tension erupted in crisis in January of 1943, when students petitioned to have Fromm teach analytic technique at the institute. The faculty rejected this request and suggested that Fromm instead teach technique at the New School for Social Research. Fromm himself then demanded the right to teach this course as part of the formal program, threatening to resign over the issue. In response to this challenge, the association, led by Horney, effectively purged Fromm by revoking his training privileges. Fromm, Sullivan, and Thompson then led a mass resignation from the AAP that led to the formation of the William Alanson White Institute.

The William Alanson White Institute turned out to be the closest thing to an institutional base for Fromm in American psychoanalysis. For the remainder of the 1940s, Fromm participated actively in the training of psychoanalytic students at the William Alanson White Institute, developing a network of followers for his ideas.⁵⁹ Yet even there Fromm was on the margins. Fromm moved to Mexico in 1950, establishing not only a network of followers but eventually the Mexican Psychoanalytic Institute based at the National Autonomous University in Mexico City. Fromm spent several months a year teaching and training psychoanalytic students in the United States, but he would never again be a central player in the politics of an American psychoanalytic training institute.⁶⁰ Fromm had students and allies as well as enemies at the White Institute, but Fromm's influence in American psychoanalytic life would have to come from his writings. Fromm had learned from Horney that it was possible to go over the heads of the psychoanalytic establishment by writing best selling books, but this strategy had unforeseen consequences for both Fromm's reputation and the fate of neo-Freudianism.

FAME AND PSYCHOANALYTIC NOTORIETY

The massive commercial and critical success of Fromm's *Escape From Freedom* (1941) cut any remaining bridges to psychoanalytic orthodoxy.⁶¹ American orthodox psychoanalysts had always distrusted Fromm, but he had now, like Horney, taken his criticisms of Freud to a mass audience. The bridge burning had worked both ways. The fame and financial security that *Escape from Freedom* had brought Fromm made it less necessary for him to accommodate himself to the increasingly dogmatic American Freudian institutes. As a consequence, throughout the 1940s and 1950s Fromm pursued a strategy of writing books.

After the publication of *Escape from Freedom* (1941) and *Man For Himself: Towards a Psychology of Ethics* (1947), Fromm became one of the most famous psychoanalytic thinkers in America.⁶² Internal psychoanalytic debates were subtexts in these first two major books, for Fromm's major concern was inserting a revised Freudian perspective into contemporary debates in political sociology and moral philosophy. Nonetheless, over time Fromm articulated his differences with orthodox psychoanalysis clearly and uncompromisingly, and the response from the psychoanalytic establishment was harsh and immediate—as can be seen from the reviews of *Escape from Freedom* and his other books published in 1940s and 1950s.⁶³ Psychiatrist Karl Menninger was among the first representatives of the psychoanalytic establishment to attack Fromm for his break with Freudian orthodoxy. In a review of *Escape From Freedom in The Nation*, Menninger argued that although Fromm wrote as if “he considered himself a psychoanalyst,” his lack of medical and psychoanalytic credentials disqualified him from serious consideration. Fromm was a “distinguished sociologist” who,



Menninger conceded, was "wholly within his rights in applying psychoanalytic theory to sociological problems." Yet as Menninger put it,

The isolation of the author himself is . . . indicated by his singular selection of authorities. Although the book purports to be psychoanalytic in character, almost no psychoanalysts are quoted or cited. The name of Freud, to be sure, is invoked a dozen times or more, but each time with some patronizing remark to the effect that while Freud had some good ideas along this or that line, his great error, which Fromm corrects, is so and so. This curious presumptuousness on the part of a relatively unknown author writing in a field with which he is not specifically identified, makes for strange overtones which blur the clarity and force of the book. No intelligent person believes that Freud said the last word, but in the field of thought which Fromm invokes for the elaboration of his theory Freud did say the first word, and any attempt to revise it should be undertaken with a full sense of the magnitude and seriousness of the task and upon empirical and experimental grounds.

Escape from Freedom, Menninger continued, was a "subjective" book, written in a "heavy, tedious style" that contained "many flatly incorrect statements, especially of Freudian theories."⁶⁵ The doctrinaire Freudian and political radical Otto Fenichel also attacked *Escape From Freedom*, accusing Fromm of abandoning psychoanalysis and the idea of the unconscious.⁶⁶

Fromm's growing autonomy and isolation from ties to the psychoanalytic establishment was both symbolized and reinforced by his move to Mexico in 1950. There are several reasons why Fromm went to Mexico and stayed for a couple of decades, but one important aspect of his decision was surely a desire to isolate himself from Freudian faction fighting and attacks that would drain energy that could better be used for politics and writing.⁶⁷ Moving to Mexico was partly a decision to take a back-seat in attempts to build a neo-Freudian institute in America even though Fromm remained active in American and international psychoanalytic politics.⁶⁸

With the publication of *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (1950), Fromm began a decade of writing on psychological theory and therapy. Fromm followed this book up with *The Forgotten Language: Towards an Interpretation of Dreams* (1951), *The Art of Loving* (1956), and *Sigmund Freud's Mission: An Analysis of His Personality and Influence* (1959).⁶⁹ *Sigmund Freud's Mission* was particularly controversial, for in it, Fromm articulated a sharp critique both of the organizational dogmatism of the psychoanalytic movement and of Freud's personality and leadership style (Fromm 1959). Fromm's writings in the 1950s represented his first sustained attempt to develop his critique of orthodox Freudian theory and therapeutic practice, consolidating his reputation as one of the major intellectuals of his time as well as the orthodox's most hated apostate.

Fromm also spent much of the late 1950s and early 1960s on political activities in the American Socialist Party and the anti-nuclear movement but he returned to write about Freud in *Beyond the Chains of Illusions: My Encounter with Marx and Freud* (1964) and *The Heart of Man* (1964). Fromm again became involved in the public airing of internal psychoanalytic debates with his controversial *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis* (1970), a polemical critique of both orthodoxy and the inadequacies of alternative revisions of psychoanalysis. Predicting the institutional and legitimacy crisis that later came to pass with a vengeance. Fromm also distanced himself from ego psychology, Melanie Klein, and, to a lesser extent, the work of his former neo-Freudian collaborators.⁷⁰

In any case, both Horney and Sullivan were dead by the middle of the 1950s, and younger neo-Freudians were fragmenting because of continuing sectarian and professional conflict, leaving Fromm to represent neo-Freudianism just as he was isolated from any orthodox



establishment. Throughout the 1970s, neo-Freudianism declined in the wake of both orthodox Freudian attacks and the general decline of psychoanalysis.⁷¹ And as Fromm became the most famous and visible of the neo-Freudians, organized interest in the school of thought declined dramatically partly because he was such an easy target for attack as a controversial radical and a difficult person with many enemies within the social sciences, mental health professions, and the American intellectual, cultural and religious elite. Orthodox psychoanalysts and their supporters argued that Fromm's fame and widespread influence in America in the 1940s and 1950s was owing to his optimistic utopianism, a perspective that allowed the Americanization of Freud's more pessimistic and complex theories. Fromm's superficial, desexualized and overly optimistic thought gave American culture a more palatable version of psychoanalysis, according to this argument. Fromm was accused of betraying or watering down genuine Freudian insight in order to write popular books that would make Americans feel good about themselves, ignoring the tragic vision at the core of Freudian thought. In this conventional wisdom, Fromm and the neo-Freudians, Sullivan and Horney, contributed to the Americanization of psychoanalysis at the expense of challenging and insightful elements of psychoanalytic thought.⁷²

FROMM AS THE NEW TRIDON? BETWEEN HERETIC AND CELEBRITY

Fromm's role in this decline of neo-Freudianism cannot be fully understood, however, by focusing exclusively on his controversial ideas and personality. Much of the literature on schools of thought tends to assume that struggles for legitimacy and resources go on largely within particular disciplines and professions, leaving under-theorized the ways in which resources and prestige are often transferred and converted across institutional boundaries.⁷³ Neo-Freudianism declined so dramatically largely because in the middle of the 1950s, Fromm became the most prominent representative of the current, and the sociological dynamics that created the "rise and fall" of Fromm also foreordained the fate of cultural psychoanalysis. Close association with Fromm was so damaging to the legitimization of neo-Freudianism because he was a very unique cross between a psychoanalytic heretic and a cultural celebrity, a process itself created largely by the interaction of his intellectual creativity and commitment to escape from all orthodoxies and the complex and overlapping network of influences, allies, institutions, and resources to which he had access from the 1930s through the 1960s.

Fromm was in a very different sociological and financial situation than the other neo-Freudians. Fromm was in a far less vulnerable position than other emigré lay psychoanalysts and medical doctors like Horney and Sullivan. Part of the reason that most psychoanalysts throughout the 1940s and 1950s were circumspect in their criticisms of Freudian orthodoxy is that psychoanalytic institutions were "greedy institutions" that structured in an intense identification with the psychoanalytic establishment.⁷⁴ In addition, in order to be a psychoanalyst, one had to have an advanced degree and then be accepted into a highly selective, expensive, and intense training experience that encouraged an extreme and often highly personal sense of identification with the theories of one's teachers who knew all the intimate details of a candidate's emotional life. And there were material incentives involved because young psychoanalysts finishing their training are likely to be close to 40 years old, deeply in debt and highly dependent on referrals from established professionals.⁷⁵

In contrast to most psychoanalysts, Fromm's early relationships with Horney, Sullivan, and the Frankfurt School and his later intellectual ties to Marxism and sociology helped create a thinker unwilling to accommodate his thought to psychoanalytic orthodoxy or narrow medical professionalism. When Fromm became a tenured faculty member of the Institute for



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Social Research, his regular salary gave him a certain independence from psychoanalytic institutes.⁷⁶ Throughout the 1930s, Fromm's tenured position meant that he was not forced to fight exclusively for a voice within the psychoanalytic world, but he had the option of exiting in order to gain an audience within the social sciences and the broader intellectual culture. As a consequence, Fromm had fewer incentives to moderate his criticisms of Freudian orthodoxy in order to diplomatically gain influence within psychoanalysis. Conversely, Fromm's ties with Horney and Sullivan helped him to see that he did not have to become such a loyal supporter of Horkheimer's vision of critical theory as Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. Contrary to the origin myth promoted by supporters and historians of the Frankfurt School, Fromm was an early and important contributor to the development of what we now call critical theory. Fromm's therapeutic practice, independent connections to an intellectual and scholarly elite, and his later celebrity status, however, created an additional independence that made a break between Fromm and the Frankfurt School inevitable.⁷⁷

By the 1950s, then, Fromm was a psychoanalytic heretic, with radical politics and no real material incentives to tie his reputation to either neo-Freudianism or critical theory. Freudians might have been willing to forgive some of his theoretical differences with psychoanalytic orthodoxy if he had not been a politically radical celebrity who was a critic of the myths promoted about Freud by his followers and the sect-like organization of psychoanalytic institutes. And since Fromm had no real practical need to moderate his views, he increasingly spread his criticisms of psychoanalysis widely within the broader culture, a heresy all the more challenging because of Fromm's credentials as a psychoanalyst.⁷⁸ Fromm became the Andre Tridon of the 1950s and 1960s, and he was even a greater threat to both the sect and the profession of psychoanalysis because he was more famous and prestigious as an intellectual and scholar, more independent, a better writer, and more radical. There were career liabilities to young Freudians associated with Sullivan and Horney in the 1940s and 1950s, but Fromm signified total exile. The more Fromm came to represent neo-Freudianism in the public eye, the more the school of thought was doomed. This was especially true because Fromm had no interest in starting a new school of psychoanalysis, preferring to see himself as someone building on Freud's insights.⁷⁹ And since Fromm had political and intellectual ambitions beyond the world of therapy, he often highlighted his radicalism in order to dissociate himself from the politics of Horney and Sullivan.⁸⁰

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FROMM, HORNEY AND SULLIVAN

Indirect evidence for my argument that Fromm's sociological position was central to the instability of neo-Freudianism can be provided by a look at the different receptions of Fromm, Horney, and Sullivan in American intellectual life after the 1970s.⁸¹ There were important sociological differences between the work and reception of Horney, Sullivan, and Fromm that help explain the demise of neo-Freudianism.⁸²

Horney was famous a decade before Fromm, and her reputation also declined somewhat in the 1960s. It is true that Horney had her own institute, but it was relatively small and isolated, and thus her followers were unable to maintain a Horneyan perspective in the larger psychoanalytic and intellectual world. Horney's work also fell into a decline among intellectuals and scholars along with the move away from "culture and personality" theories in the 1960s.⁸³

Horney's reputation, however, received a boost with the rise of psychoanalytic feminism in the middle 1970s. Although psychoanalysts influenced by orthodox Freudian theory and Lacan were largely dismissive of Horney, feminists and the object relations school eventually



re-discovered Horney as one of the “Mothers of Psychoanalysis” who laid the foundation for contemporary feminist psychoanalysis.⁸⁴ Within psychoanalysis, Horney was a pioneer in the promotion of “self analysis” and short-term and cheaper types of therapy, thus helping create a space for her work among eclectic therapists. Horney’s reputation in the social sciences was helped not only by her intellectual and personal relationship to Simmel but by the sociological orientation of her later work.⁸⁵ And since she was not a political radical, she fit into mainstream American liberal culture easier than Fromm did.

Sullivan, unlike Horney and Fromm, has not suffered a reputational decline in recent years. Although many people have argued that Sullivan has not received the recognition he deserves within American psychiatry his reputation, if anything, has been increasing over the last 30 years relative to similar intellectuals from the same generation as can be seen through citation analysis.⁸⁶ The diffusion of Sullivan’s psychoanalytic ideas was aided by several important factors.

First, Sullivan was the central figure in the formation of both the William Alanson White Institute and the Washington School of Psychiatry, prestigious training centres for psychoanalysts. Second, Sullivan was an insightful clinician and a charismatic figure who trained numerous analysts who later insured that Sullivan’s unpublished lectures were pulled together into books. Sullivan’s followers passed on his theories and clinical approach, eventually carving out a place for interpersonal psychoanalysis within the psychoanalytic mainstream. Sullivan’s journal, *Psychiatry*, in particular, helped create a market for his work among scholars interested in a dialogue between the social sciences and psychoanalysis.

In addition, Sullivan was networked with and maintained relationships with some very important American social scientists outside the mental health professions. Sullivan was influenced not only by Mead, the University of Chicago pragmatist theorist of the self, but psychiatrist Adolf Meyer, a thinker who influenced sociologist W. I. Thomas.⁸⁷ Sullivan’s perspective thus fit easily into the emerging symbolic interactionist tradition within American sociology in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s partly because Sullivan was extremely critical of Freud and relatively uninterested in exclusively internal psychoanalytic debates. Sullivan’s link to the University of Chicago was solidified by his therapeutic practice and interdisciplinary interests. Sullivan, for example, was the personal analyst for University of Chicago anthropologist Edward Sapir, who later went on to help develop the research tradition on “culture and personality” at Yale University.⁸⁸

Fromm, in contrast, did not seem to have had any interest in or knowledge of Mead and Cooley, although he did refer to William James and was interested in the work of Dewey. Fromm’s closer association with the psychoanalytic perspective likely hurt his reputation among symbolic interactionists in sociology who tended to be critical of a focus on unconscious motivation.⁸⁹ Where Sullivan had friends at the University of Chicago, Fromm had enemies, particularly Louis Wirth, a sharp critic of Fromm for political as well as intellectual reasons. When *Escape from Freedom* was published, Wirth wrote a blistering attack on Fromm’s “cosmic” thesis, “ambiguous terms,” and “predilection to play with riddles and anomalies.”⁹⁰

Sullivan’s rather difficult writing style and lack of explicit interest in politics probably helped his reputation. Sullivan’s critique of Freudian orthodoxy was made in fairly obscure language and published in technical psychoanalytic journals—a contrast to Fromm’s and Horney’s published criticisms of Freudian theory and institutes in mass market books. Members of the psychoanalytic establishment were opposed to all neo-Freudian revisionism but, as discussed above, the level of hatred that Fromm and Horney inspired among the faithful was directly related to the size of the audience they addressed. Sullivan did not criticize the



psychoanalytic establishment through a medium that would reach the potential client base for orthodox Freudians. Moreover, Sullivan, unlike Horney and Fromm, often focused on psychotics and so did not see himself as a Freudian, and his critique of orthodoxy was therefore not as threatening internally to psychoanalysis.

In addition, Sullivan's therapeutic perspective positioned him as a defender of outcasts in American society, particularly the schizophrenic and juvenile delinquents. Thus Sullivan benefited from the general culture rebellions of the 1960s and 1970s, as intellectuals and activists challenged gender roles, the authority of adults, professionals, and the therapeutic establishment, and the ways in which deviance was socially constructed. Sullivan himself would not have been at the forefront of this social and political turmoil—he was far less of a political public intellectual than Horney and Fromm. Sullivan, like Bruno Bettelheim, often saw radical activists as neurotic individuals. The ambiguity of Sullivan's view thus gained him allies among mainstream American social scientists and mental health professionals without making as many enemies as Fromm did. And many of Sullivan's enemies were angered by his irresponsibility with money and organizational details and his difficult personality, far less ideological issues than those at stake between Fromm and his political opponents and Freudian detractors.⁹¹

Personal differences between former intellectual allies can be forgotten over time, and histories of schools of thought are written to paper over these conflicts, while ideological differences within such sect-like systems like psychoanalysis and Marxism tend to last longer because of the deep and emotional commitments forged in intellectual movements.⁹² Sullivan's relatively minor role in the sect-like wars within psychoanalysis goes a long way to explaining the staying power of his reputation: Sullivan was easier to allow back into psychoanalysis than Fromm.

Sullivan's interpersonal psychology thus gained influence throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and by the end of the century, a number of writers portrayed it as an important contribution to our knowledge of the social factors involved in mental health. Sullivan's criticism of the failure of the Freudian perspective to give an adequate account of sociological factors won widespread approval even among psychoanalysts. And Sullivan's interpersonal psychoanalysis became an important part of the broader theoretical mainstream within contemporary psychoanalysis that includes other such "relational" perspectives as object relations and self psychology. Fromm's contributions, in contrast, have largely been ignored within psychoanalytic institutes, and he has become a forgotten intellectual in the social sciences and the broader culture.⁹³

CONCLUSION

Over the last decades of the twentieth century, psychology, psychiatry and the social sciences moved away from Freud. The humanities discovered Lacan, and numerous left and public intellectual defended a pure, non-revisionist Freud.⁹⁴ Neo-Freudianism did not gain a major place among established schools of thought within contemporary psychoanalysis, modern social science, or elite intellectual culture. Ironically, neo-Freudian ideas retained a massive influence on American culture and intellectual life, and developments within psychoanalysis as the century ended echoed themes developed by the neo-Freudians in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.

This failure to institutionalize their influence was overdetermined and cannot be explained primarily by personal differences between Fromm, Horney, and Sullivan. The goals, ideas, politics, and institutional and sociological positions of the major neo-Freudians were



too different from each to make a school of thought possible, since they primarily came together around a critique of a Freudian orthodoxy that few later thinkers took seriously. Horney was a talented therapist with a flair for popular writing and a proto-feminist theoretical bent. Sullivan was a brilliant and charismatic clinician who made important contributions to theorizing the links between psyche and society and who understood the importance of institution building and selling psychiatry to policymaking elites. And Fromm was an innovative and creative therapist, renegade sociologist, revisionist psychoanalyst, popular writer and radical intellectual who was ultimately more of a prophetic figure than an academic expert or even a clinician (Maccoby 1995).⁹⁵

Sullivan's interpersonal psychoanalysis and Horney's proto-feminist psychoanalysis inherited the legacy of neo-Freudianism, a school of thought that never crystallized. The story of the decline of neo-Freudianism cannot be told through the lenses of the individual or even the collective lives of its major founders, nor can the historical and sociological literature on schools of thought fully account for the paradoxical success of neo-Freudian ideas alongside the institutional failure of what once appeared as an intellectual constellation. This is because neo-Freudianism was not simply a collection of talented psychoanalytic theorists nor a traditional academic school of thought but instead can best be conceptualized as the merging of a faction of a sect-like intellectual movement with a literary phenomenon, interacting with the professionalization processes of modern social science and psychiatry as well as the celebrity-dominated culture of the close of the century.

A rich research agenda flows from an analysis of these general sociological dynamics. Psychoanalysis, Marxism and positivism are obvious examples of intellectual movements that have had an enormous influence on modern culture.⁹⁶ George Orwell and Vance Packard represent examples of influential intellectuals whose relationship to modern academic literature and sociology, respectively, can be conceptualized partly as case studies of literary phenomenon meeting professionalizing disciplines.⁹⁷ Modern rational choice theory in the social sciences and ethnomethodology within sociology offers potential case studies of creative academic theories and research agendas with cult-like cultures. And the history of Skinner's behaviorism, contemporary post-modernism, and some academic feminism will be told best, I contend, by theorizing the consequences of the merger of intellectual sects and movements, literary phenomena, and modern mental health professions and academic disciplines. Neo-Freudianism was not alone in being a creative and innovative hybrid intellectual system that was not quite a school of thought.

NOTES

Sonia Gojman Millan and Salvador Millan's insight into Fromm's psychoanalysis, his years in Mexico, and his activities in international neo-Freudian organizations were extremely helpful, as was the help of the leadership of the Mexican Psychoanalytic Institute. I must thank Rainer Funk for facilitating access to the Erich Fromm Archives in Tübingen, Germany.

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4. Herberg, "Freud and the Revisionists," and Hale, *Freud and the Americans*.

5. As of this writing, Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology is far more widely known among general readers and undergraduate students today than the work of the neo-Freudians, even though Maslow is quite marginal to academic psychology, and he is not well regarded among the intellectual elite; see Edward Hoffman, *The Right to Be Human. A Biography of Abraham Maslow* (Los Angeles: St. Martin's Press, 1988). The psychological existential writings of Jean-Paul Sartre have an intellectual prestige that neo-Freudianism does not have, and Rollo May's existential psychology is widely discussed and referenced in popular books and non-academic writings. Lacan's psychology has a very real influence with the academic humanities today; see Sherry Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics: Freud's French Revolution* (New York: Guilford Press, 1992).

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7. Coser, *Refugee Scholars*; Paris, *Karen Horney*; and Quinn, *Mind of Her Own*. The boundaries of what could be considered neo-Freudianism is a complex issue that I shall bracket for the purpose of this article, focusing somewhat arbitrarily on Horney, Sullivan, and Fromm. Certainly Abram Kardiner, Franz Alexander, and perhaps Erik Erikson could be considered neo-Freudians, but I shall exclude them here because of their explicit rejection of this theoretical perspective and their closer ties and commitments to orthodox Freudians. Clara Thompson has a strong claim to be central to a full history of neo-Freudianism, but she was largely important in organizational terms and as a historian of the movement, not as a major figure in the theoretical development of cultural psychoanalysis. Freida Fromm-Reichmann's work and life is best told from the perspective of the history of American psychiatry and not as a part of neo-Freudianism.

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10. Tuchman and Fortin, *Edging Women Out*; Lewis Coser, Charles Kadushin, and Walter Powell, *Books, The Culture and Commerce of Publishing* (New York: Basic Books, 1982); and Niilo Kauppi, *French Intellectual Nobility: Institutional and Symbolic Transformations in the Post-Sartrean Era* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).
 11. For the professionalization of sociology, see Platt, *History of Sociological Methods*, and Turner and Turner, *The Impossible Science*. On the role of intellectual sects, see Lewis Coser, *Men of Ideas: A Sociologist's View* (New York: Free Press, 1965). For celebrity culture, see: Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Kauppi, *French Intellectual Nobility*, and Rodden, *Politics of Literary Reputation*.
 12. Jay Greenberg and Stephen Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).
 13. Servos, "Research Schools;" Morrell, "The Chemist Breeders;" Bulmer, *Chicago School*; Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics*, and Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994).
 14. Servos, "Research Schools."
 15. Jennifer Platt has provided a valuable overview of the sociological and historical literature on the origin myths in the social sciences, see Platt, *History of Sociological Methods*, a perspective earlier pioneered by Franz Samelson, "History, Origin, Myth and Ideology: 'Discovery' of Social Psychology," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 4 (1974): 229. Platt also has written extensively about how the history of the Chicago School of sociology was written retrospectively in ways that were more useful to contemporary sociologists than they were historically accurate. John Rodden has written insightfully about the role of origin myths in the making and claiming of George Orwell's reputation; see Rodden, *Politics of Literary Reputation*. Elsewhere I have adapted the origin myths idea to help understand the emergence of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School for Social Research; see Neil McLaughlin, "Origin Myths in the Social Sciences: Fromm, the Frankfurt School and the emergence of Critical Theory," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, forthcoming.
 16. Coser, *Refugee Scholars*
 17. Nancy Chodorow, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); and Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations*. Burston, *Legacy of Fromm*; Mauricio Cortna, "Beyond Sigmund Freud's Instinctivism and Fromm's Existential Humanism," in *A Prophetic Analyst: Erich Fromm's Contributions to Psychoanalysis*. Mauricio Cortna and Michael Maccoby, eds. (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1996), 93–131; Mauricio Cortna and Michael Maccoby, introduction to *A Prophetic Analyst*, 1–57; and Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations*.
 18. McLaughlin, "How to Become Forgotten."
 19. Kauppi, *French Intellectual Nobility*; Rodden, *Politics of Literary Reputation*.
 20. Brown, *Freud and the Post-Freudians*.
 21. Marcie Westkott, *The Feminist Legacy of Karen Horney* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Paris, *Karen Horney*; and Hale, *Freud and the Americans*, 346–347.
 22. Westkott, *Feminist Legacy*.
 23. Lewis Perry, *Intellectual Life in America. A History* (New York: Watts, 1984); Hale, *Freud and the Americans*, and Mullahy, *Beginnings of American Psychiatry*.
 24. Burston, *Legacy of Fromm*; Neil McLaughlin, "Nazism, Nationalism and the Sociology of Emotions: *Escape from Freedom* Revisited," *Sociological Theory* 14 (1996): 421–441; and McLaughlin, "Origin Myths".
 25. Benjamin Harris and Brock Adnan, "Otto Fenichel and the Left Opposition in Psychoanalysis," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 27 (1991): 157–165, and Jacoby, *Social Amnesia*.
 26. Hale, *Freud and the Americans*, Harris and Brock, "Otto Fenichel and the Left;" Jacoby, *Social Amnesia*
 27. Harris and Brock, "Otto Fenichel and the Left;" Burston, *Legacy of Fromm*; and Funk, *Erich Fromm*
 28. Hale, *Freud and the Americans*, Burston, *Legacy of Fromm*; and Funk, *Erich Fromm*.
 29. Burnham, *Paths into American Culture*; Hale, *Freud and the Americans*.
 30. McLaughlin, "Origin Myths;" Funk, *Erich Fromm*; Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination. A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973); and Hale, *Freud and the Americans*.
 31. Ultimately, too impressionistic to meet the standards of professional social science, and often promoting ideas that looked like stereotypes in the context of postwar culture, "culture and personality" theories became unfashionable and partly took the work of Horney and the neo-Freudians down with them. For a discussion of the "rise and fall" of "culture and personality" within anthropology, see *The Making of Psychological Anthropology*. George Spindler, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). And for an attempt to refine the perspective, combining revised



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Freudian and Marxist theory with sociological methods and intensive psychological testing, see Erich Fromm and Michael Maccoby, *Social Character in a Mexican Village* (New Jersey: Transaction Press, 1996).

32. Daniel Burston's *The Legacy of Erich Fromm* is right to highlight the important role played by the network around Sullivan, but Burston's analysis is overly psychological and insufficiently sociological. For example, Burston (p. 24) describes the Zodiac Club as an informal discussion group and then suggests that Fromm was not officially a member. The dynamics that Burston is trying to describe could be illuminated by the sociological idea of social circles first developed by Simmel. See Charles Kadushin, *The American Intellectual Elite* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974); Znaniecki, *Social Role*; and Coser, Kadushin, and Powell, *Books*.

33. Roazen, *Freud and His Followers*.

34. Quinn, *Mind of Her Own*, and the recent book, Paris, *Karen Horney*. Like those authors, some have argued that Horney's difficulties establishing relationships with men and Fromm's tendency to get involved with older women to take care of him were at the root of their problems. Paris' book contains a very interesting discussion of Horney's published case studies, provocatively suggesting that the relationship between Horney and Fromm was described in Horney's own books.

35. Burston, *Legacy of Fromm*.

36. Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (New York: Rinehart, 1955), 193, 199.

37. Mullahy concludes his review with, "It is difficult to estimate adequately the importance of *Escape from Freedom*. Besides making a profound and original contribution to the understanding of human psychology, Dr. Fromm has demonstrated the way in which psychology interacts with social process. The role of freedom and its dynamic character has been given a new and more vital meaning." Patrick Mullahy, review of *Escape from Freedom*, by Erich Fromm, *Psychiatry* 5 (1942): 121. Mullahy had intended to write *Oedipus* together with Fromm, who ended up writing the introduction. And as Burston puts it, "Mullahy's summary of Fromm's view was crisp, incisive, and sympathetic." Burston, *Legacy of Fromm*, 161.

38. Patrick Mullahy, review of *The Sane Society*, by Erich Fromm, *Psychiatry* 18 (1955): 399–409, especially pp. 403, 405, 409.

39. I recently came to understand Fromm's attitude towards American psychoanalysts in a different light by reading the extensive correspondence between Fromm and Lewis Mumford in the Erich Fromm Archives in the charge of German psychoanalyst, Rainer Funk. Fromm cared much more about how radical intellectuals like Mumford reacted to his writings that he worried about the opinions of thinkers in the broad Freudian camp. The arrogance that many American neo-Freudians complained about was rooted not simply in Fromm's personality but had much to do with the fact that his major reference group was international radical humanist social critics, not American clinicians.

40. Peter Berger, "Towards a Sociological Understanding of Psychoanalysis." *Social Research* 32 (1965): 21–41; Edith Kurzweil, *The Freudians: A Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Arnold Rogow, *The Psychiatrists* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1970); Coser, *Refugee Scholars*; and Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics*.

41. Coser, *Refugee Scholars*. and Berger, "Towards Sociological Understanding."

42. Burnham, *Paths into American Culture*; Hale, *Freud and the Americans*; and Coser, *Refugee Scholars*.

43. Burnham, *Paths into American Culture*; Hale, *Freud and the Americans*, p. 74, 59; and John C. Burnham, *Psychoanalysis and American Medicine, 1894–1918: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (New York: International Universities Press, 1967).

44. Hale, *Freud and the Americans*, especially pp. 33, 70, 72.

45. *Ibid.*

46. Roazen, *Freud and His Followers*.

47. For a discussion of the question of eclecticism and psychoanalysis, see Burnham, *Psychoanalysis and American Medicine*.

48. Hale, *Freud and the Americans*.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Rogow, *Psychiatrists*.

51. Hale, *Freud and the Americans*, 136.

52. Ortmeier, "History of Founders;" Paris, *Karen Horney*; and Hale, *Freud and the Americans*.

53. Coser, *Men of Ideas*.

54. Karen Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Times* (New York: Norton, 1937), and *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1939). See also, Paris, *Karen Horney*, especially p. xviii; and Hale, *Freud and the Americans*.

55. Ortmeier, "History of Founders;" Paris, *Karen Horney*; and Hale, *Freud and the Americans*.

56. Hale, *Freud and the Americans*; Paris, *Karen Horney*.

57. Hale, *Freud and the Americans*; Ortmeier, "History of Founders."

58. Quinn, *Mind of Her Own*, and Paris, *Karen Horney*.



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- 59 Bernard Landis and Edward Tauber. *In the Name of Life: Essays in Honor of Erich Fromm* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, 1971).
60. Burston. *Legacy of Fromm*
61. Don Hausdorf. *Erich Fromm* (New York: Twayne, 1972). and McLaughlin. "Nazism, Nationalism."
62. Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself: Towards a Psychology of Ethics* (New York: Rinehart, 1947).
63. McLaughlin. "Escape from Orthodoxy: A Sociology of Knowledge Analysis of the Rise and Fall of Erich Fromm" (Ph.D. diss., The City University of New York, 1996); Burston. *Legacy of Fromm*; and Funk, *Erich Fromm*.
- 64 Karl Menninger. "Loneliness in the Modern World," *Nation* 14 (1942): 317 Fromm was always getting caught in professional turf wars. Despite the fact that Fromm had a Ph.D. in sociology, American sociologists claimed that he was not a social scientist but should stick with his expertise in psychoanalysis; see Green, "Sociological Analysis."
65. Menninger, "Loneliness," 317.
66. Otto Fenichel. "Psychoanalytic Remarks on Fromm's book *Escape from Freedom*," *Psychoanalytic Review* 31 (1944): 133–152.
67. Although for an emphasis on Fromm's alleged desire to control a school of his own in an authoritarian manner, see Victor Saavedra, *La Promesa Incumplida de Erich Fromm* (Coyoacán: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1994).
68. Sonia Gojman Millan and Salvador Millan are right to point out that despite the critics who suggest that Fromm was not really a Freudian, he was deeply committed to psychoanalytic politics, given his founding role in the early 1960s in the International Federation of Psychoanalytic Societies, a broadly neo-Freudian organization that remains active today. Fromm's move to Mexico was part of his commitment to international psychoanalysis as well as politics, while a concern with neo-Freudianism more narrowly would have required a more exclusive focus on American intellectual developments.
- 69 Erich Fromm. *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950); *The Forgotten Language: An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales, and Myths* (New York: Rinehart, 1951); *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956); and *Sigmund Freud's Mission: An Analysis of His Personality and Influence* (New York: Harper, 1959).
70. McLaughlin. "How to Become Forgotten." Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusions. My Encounter with Marx and Freud* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964); and *The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964); Erich Fromm, *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Premier Books, 1970). Paul Roazen, "Erich Fromm's Courage," in *A Prophetic Analyst*, Cortuna and Maccoby, eds., 427–453.
71. Hale. *Freud and the Americans*
72. John Schaar. *Escape from Authority: The Perspectives of Erich Fromm* (New York: Basic Books, 1961). I am not taking up here the atmosphere in which individual Marxists were de-legitimated in the Cold War decades.
73. Kauppi, *French Intellectual Nobility*, and Rodden, *Politics of Literary Reputation*
74. Lewis Coser. *Greedy Institutions: Patterns of Undivided Commitment* (New York: Free Press, 1974)
75. Hale. *Freud and the Americans*.
76. McLaughlin. "Escape from Orthodoxy," Stephen Eric Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists* (London: Blackwell, 1994); Jay, *Dialectical Imagination*; and McLaughlin, "Origin Myths."
77. *Ibid.*
78. During an interview in 1992, I asked David Riesman if he had experienced hostility from orthodox Freudians for his adherence to a version of neo-Freudianism. He did not remember particularly violent opposition from the psychoanalytic establishment. Riesman was not perceived as a threat to the internal cohesion of psychoanalysis since he was an intellectual and sociologist, not a therapist or psychoanalytic theorist. It was not the content of the revision of Freudian ideas alone that explains the reaction of psychoanalysts to Fromm, but rather his position as an internal heretic, not an outside critic.
79. Burston. *Legacy of Fromm*.
80. Part of the issue here was that Fromm was being attacked by both orthodox Freudians and doctrinaire Marxists, and so he was forced to carve out his radical position in contrast to the liberalism of Horney and Sullivan; see V. I. Dobrenkov, *Neo-Freudians in Search of Truth* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976); John Richert, "The Fromm-Marcuse Debate Revisited," *Theory and Society* 15 (1986): 351–400; and Bronner, *Critical Theory*.
81. For an example of how reputations can be studied comparatively, see Jennifer Platt, "Stouffer and Lazarsfeld: Patterns of Influence," *Knowledge and Society* 6 (1986): 99–117; Kapsis, *Hitchcock*, and Coser, *Refugee Intellectuals*.
82. Evidence for the different reputational histories of the three thinkers is contained in McLaughlin, "Escape from Orthodoxy," as well as citation data compiled for my book in progress on Fromm's reception in American intellectual life.
83. *Psychological Anthropology*, Spindler, Ed. Barbara Lenkerd, "Theoretical Approach: Erich Fromm's Theory of Social Character as Adapted by Michael Maccoby," in "Meanings and Motivations at Work" (Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1994).



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84. Janet Sayers, *Mothers of Psychoanalysis: Helene Deutch, Karen Horney, Anna Freud, and Melanie Klein* (New York: Norton, 1991); Chodorow, *Feminism and Theory*; Edith Kurzweil, *Freudians and Feminists* (Boulder, Co Westview, 1995); and Kurzweil, *The Freudians*.
85. Westkott, *Feminist Legacy*.
86. Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations*; Perry, *Intellectual Life*; and McLaughlin, "Escape from Orthodoxy."
87. Writing of the pre-history of his interpersonal theory of psychiatry, Harry Stack Sullivan, *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry* (New York: Norton, 1953), 16, discussed the importance of "some very original thinking by Charles H. Cooley, George Herbert Mead, at the University of Chicago" and the similarities between the ideas of the University of Chicago sociologists and his own ideas. See also, Bulmer, *The Chicago School*.
88. Bulmer, *The Chicago School*.
89. Dennis Wrong, *The Problem of Order: What Unites and Divides Society* (New York: Free Press, 1994).
90. See McLaughlin, "Nazism, Nationalism," and "Escape from Orthodoxy;" Wirth made several valuable, substantive points about the limitations of *Escape from Freedom*, yet much of Wirth's review is unnecessarily nasty and uncharitable; Louis Wirth, review of *Escape from Freedom*, by Erich Fromm, *Psychiatry* 5 (1942): 129, 130.
91. Roazen, "Rise and Fall of Bettelheim." Perry, *Intellectual Life*.
92. Platt, *History of Sociological Methods*.
93. Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations*. Burston, *Legacy of Fromm*. McLaughlin, "How to Become Forgotten."
94. Russell Jacoby, *The Repression of Psychoanalysis: Otto Fenichel and the Political Freudians* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); Kurzweil, *Freudians and Feminists*; Hale, *Freud and the Americans*; Roazen, *Freud and His Followers*; Roazen, *Encountering Freud*; Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics*; Richert, "Fromm-Marcuse Debate;" Paul Robinson, *The Freudian Left: Wilhelm Reich, Géza Róheim, and Herbert Marcuse* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); Bronner, *Critical Theory: Coser, Refugee Scholars*; Lamont, "How to Become Philosopher;" Cortina, "Sigmund Freud's Instinctivism;" Cortina and Maccoby, "Neglect of Fromm;" and Jacoby, *Social Amnesia*.
95. Michael Maccoby, "The Two Voices of Erich Fromm: Prophet and Analyst," *Society* 32 (1995): 72-82. For the general decline of public intellectuals, a term popularized by Jacoby, see: Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (New York: Noonday Press, 1989); Steven Brint, *In an Age of Experts: The Changing Role of Professionals in Politics and Public Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); and Perry, *Intellectual Life*.
96. Coser, *Men of Ideas*.
97. Daniel Horowitz, Vance Packard, and Rodden, *Politics of Literary Reputation*.



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