MEMOIRE OF A 

GEISHA

Adler’s Human Motivation Theory

Psychology 370/ Yuka Kawasaki
Adlerian Theory

- Alfred Adler’s Human motivation theory
- Japanese cultural aspect
Summary

- It is 1929 in Japan, the main character Sayuri is sold into the **Okiya (Geisha house)** when she is nine, where her life is changed forever.
- It is here where she realizes that her destiny is to become a successful **geisha**, no matter how much she is tortured by Hatumomo, mean geisha.
- She struggles the daily life of being treated like a slave.
- However, an encounter with the wealthy and kind Chairman changes her luck and brings hope in her life.
- Her unusual blue-gray eyes play an important role in her physical appearance as a geisha.
- When she turns fifteen, Mameha, Gion's most successful geisha and Hatsumomo’s rival, trains her to become a geisha.
- Sayuri becomes highly successful and manages to pay back all of her debts. Although she is a successful geisha, she feels affection towards the Chairman.
- Her actions are designed to get her closer to him. She desperately attempts to attain the love of him and wants him to become her patron.

http://movies.aol.com/movie/memoirs-of-a-geisha/21001/main
http://movies.aol.com/movie/memoirs-of-a-geisha/21001/trailer
Alfred Adler’s Human Motivation Theory

- Adler describes that “personality can only be understood holistically and systemically” (Corey, 2005, p96).

- Inferiority feeling
- Strive for superior
- Birth order
- Cultural Aspect
Inferiority feeling: The Source of Human Striving

- Feeling of inferiority is always present and is a motivating force in behavior.
- Throughout our lives, we are driven by the need to overcome this sense of inferiority and to strive for an increasingly higher level of development.

Example: Sayuri strives for success against Hatumomo because Hatumomo always tortures her and makes her life very difficult. For example, she ordered Sayuri to ruin Mameha’s kimono, which causes an increase of Sayuri’s debt. This inferiority of feelings is the source of Sayuri’s motivation, and eventually Hatumomo’s status with her is swapped while she is overcoming her inferiority.
Striving for Superiority

- The urge toward perfection
- Guiding self-ideal and goal of perfection to account for our striving toward superiority

e.g.) Her self-ideal of getting closer to Chairman after the first encounter with him guides her.
Birth order

- It predisposes certain personality traits.
- She is a second child.
- The second children are likely to be competitive, trying to catch others and learn quickly, have strong social interest, and being optimistic.
Birth order

- Competitive: She is **speedy** and **surpasses** Pumpkin.
- She also has a sense of belonging and of contributing in society due to her strong **social interest**

The sense of belonging: Friendship with Pumpkin & Mentorship with Mameha

For contributing society, she is dedicated to preserve traditional geisha art after the war. She also plays important role at many business meetings by supporting Chairman, and leads his business success.

- She is **optimistic** too.
Japanese cultural aspects

- Sayuri could be difficult to overcome her inferiority against Hatumomo
Difficult to overcome her inferiority

Japanese emphasize group identity, group conformity, group goal, and social harmony in interpersonal relationship

- Japanese tend to be self-critical when they feel some affective bonds to others with close relationship
- Japanese tend to display hostility and competition with those who do not have an intimate relationship

E.g.) Her critical thoughts greatly increase feelings of inferiority
Alfred Adler’s theory could easily be applied to Sayuri’s personality.
The END