

TimeLine

Person of the Month: Karen Horney (1885-1952)

Ankit Patel^{1*}

Born	16 September 1885 Blankenese, Schleswig-Holstein, Prussia, German Empire (now Blankenese, Hamburg, Germany)
Died	4 December 1952, New York City, New York, United States
Citizenship	German
Known for	Psychoanalyst Feminist Psychology
Education	The University of Freiburg (1900) The University of Göttingen (1908)



Karen Horney (nee Danielson) was born near Hamburg, Germany on September 16, 1885. Her father was a religious, authoritarian ship's captain, while her mother was a well-educated, more liberal intellectual who encouraged Danielson in her studies. Her father was a widower with four teenage children. Danielson was the second child from his new marriage, the first being a favoured older brother. Unflattering comments by her father relating to both her looks and her intelligence led Danielson to decide, at the age of nine, that if she couldn't be pretty, then she would be smart. At age nine she also battled depression for the first time and would continue the battle throughout her life. At 13, Danielson decided she wanted to become a doctor - a lofty and perhaps not very realistic goal for a young woman in the late 19th century. Without her parents' support, Danielson nonetheless entered medical school in 1906 as one of the first women to enter a German university. While there, she met economics major and aspiring law student, Oskar Horney, and the two married in 1909. It was not a particularly happy marriage although it did result in three daughters born between 1910 and 1916. Within the space of one year, Horney gave birth to her first daughter and lost both of her parents. She sought psychoanalysis to help her cope. Her analyst was Freud disciple Karl Abraham, who became her mentor at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Society where she became an analyst in private practice in addition to her hospital work. She helped design and

¹ Clinical Psychology, Dept. of Psychology, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar, Gujarat

*Responding Author

Received: October 01, 2017; Revision Received: October 15, 2017; Accepted: October 25, 2017

Person of the Month: Karen Horney (1885-1952)

eventually directed the Society's training program, taught students, and conducted psychoanalytic research. Her roles as woman doctor, wife, and mother inspired her research on female sexual development, writing about the castration complex in women in 1924 and asserting - contrary to Freud - which the true source of penis envy was in the way female children were treated by their parents.

As Freud might have predicted, she had married a man not unlike her father: Oscar was an authoritarian as harsh with his children as the captain had been with his. Horney notes that she did not intervene, but rather considered the atmosphere good for her children and encouraging their independence. Only many years later did hindsight change her perspective on childrearing.

In 1923, Oskar's business collapsed and he developed meningitis. He became a broken man, morose and argumentative. Also in 1923, Karen's brother died at the age of 40 of a pulmonary infection. Karen became very depressed, to the point of swimming out to a sea piling during a vacation with thoughts of committing suicide.

Karen and her daughters moved out of Oskar's house in 1926 and, four years later, moved to the U.S., eventually settling in Brooklyn. In the 1930's, Brooklyn was the intellectual capital of the world, due in part to the influx of Jewish refugees from Germany. It was here that she became friends with such intellectuals as Erich Fromm and Harry Stack Sullivan, even pausing to have an affair with the former. And it was here that she developed her theories on neurosis, based on her experiences as a psychotherapist.

She practiced, taught, and wrote until her death in 1952.

TIMELINE

- 1885: Karen Horney was born September 16, to Clotilde and Berndt Wackels Danielson.
- 1900: The University of Freiburg was in fact one of the first institutions throughout Germany to enroll women in medical courses—with higher education only becoming available to women in Germany.
- 1904: Her mother divorced her father and left him with Karen and young Berndt.
- 1906: She entered medical school, against her parents' wishes and, in fact, against the opinions of polite society of the time.
- 1908: Horney had transferred to the University of Göttingen, and would transfer once more to the University of Berlin before her graduation in 1913.
- 1909: While there, she met a law student named Oscar Horney, whom she married.
- 1910: Karen gave birth to Brigitte, the first of her three daughters.
- 1911: Her mother Sonni died.
- 1917/1968: The technique of psychoanalytic therapy. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 28, 3-12.
- 1920: Karen was a founding member of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute. She then took up a teaching position within the Institute.

Person of the Month: Karen Horney (1885-1952)

- 1923: Karen's brother died at the age of 40 of a pulmonary infection. Karen became very depressed, to the point of swimming out to a sea piling during a vacation with thoughts of committing suicide.
- 1923: Oskar Horney's firm went broke, and Oskar developed meningitis soon after. Oskar rapidly became embittered, morose and argumentative.
- 1923: Oskar's business collapsed and he developed meningitis.
- 1924: Her roles as woman doctor, wife, and mother inspired her research on female sexual development, writing about the castration complex in women.
- 1924: On the genesis of the castration complex in women. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 5, 50-65.
- 1926: Karen and her daughters moved out of Oskar's house.
- 1926: Karen and Oskar separated; they would divorce several years later. Karen and her three daughters moved out of Oskar's house.
- 1926: The flight from womanhood. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 7, 324-329.
- 1933: Maternal conflicts. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 3, 455-463.
- 1935: The problem of feminine masochism. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 22, 241.
- 1937: *The neurotic personality of our time*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.
- 1942: *Self-analysis*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.
- 1945: *Our inner conflicts: A constructive theory of neurosis*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.
- 1950: *Neurosis and human growth: The struggle toward self-realization*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.
- 1952: She practiced, taught, and wrote until her death.

REFERENCES

- Dr. C. George Boeree (2006) *Karen Horney*, Retrieved from <http://webpace.ship.edu/cgboer/horney.html>
- Hitchcock, S. T. (2004). *Karen Horney: Pioneer of feminist psychology*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers.
- MacKay, J. (2010). Profile of Bonnie Strickland. In A. Rutherford (Ed.), *Psychology's Feminist Voices Multimedia Internet Archive*. Retrieved from <http://www.feministvoices.com/bonnie-strickland/>
- O'Connell, A. N. (1980). Karen Horney: Theorist in psychoanalysis and feminine psychology. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 5(1), 81-93.
- O'Connell, A. N. (1990). Karen Horney (1885-1952). *Women in psychology: A bibliographic sourcebook*, (pp. 184-190). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Paris, B. (1994). *Karen Horney: A psychoanalyst's search for self-understanding*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Quinn, S. (1987). *A mind of her own: the life of Karen Horney*. New York: Summit Books.
- Rubins, J. L. (1978). *Karen Horney: Gentle rebel of psychoanalysis*. New York: The Dial Press.
- Sayers, J. (1991). *Mothers of psychoanalysis: Helene Deutsch, Karen Horney, Anna Freud, Melanie Klein*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

Person of the Month: Karen Horney (1885-1952)

Photo Credit: <http://susanquinnbooks.com>

How to cite this article: A Patel (2017), Person of the Month: Karen Horney (1885-1952), *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Vol. 5 (1). DIP:18.01.001/20170501, DOI: 10.25215/0501.001