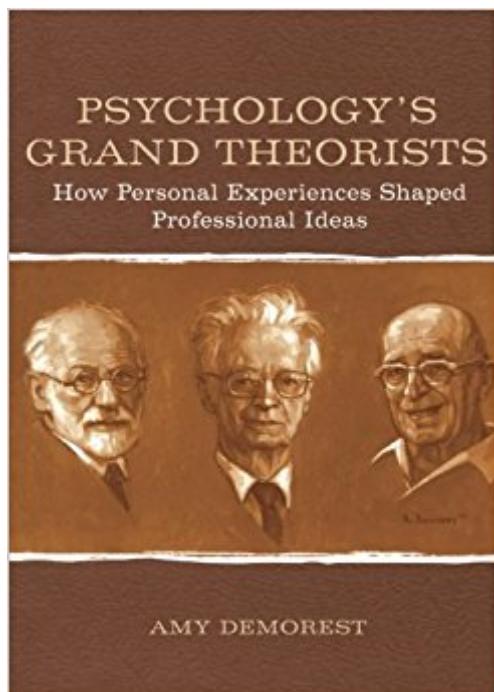


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# Psychology's Grand Theorists: How Personal Experiences Shaped Professional Ideas



## **Synopsis**

Psychology's Grand Theorists argues that the three schools in psychology that have been dominant historically--the psychodynamic, behavioral, and phenomenological--have resulted in large part from the personal experiences of their originators. Sigmund Freud, B.F. Skinner, and Carl Rogers each believed that he had discovered the truth about human nature, yet their truths are entirely different. This book explores how the lives of these men influenced the divergent theories they developed, through a close examination of letters, diaries, biographies, autobiographies, and professional writings. Uncovering the subjective sources of these theories, the book gives the reader a greater sense of intimacy with each man's ideas, and promotes critical inquiry into their scientific status. The book is written in an engaging style that will appeal to a wide range of readers. Intended as a supplement in courses on personality, clinical psychology, and/or the history of psychology, it will also be of interest to clinicians or counselors who use one or more of these theoretical models in their therapeutic work.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Amy Demorest has written an elegant and insightful book about how the personal lives of psychology's most well-known theorists deeply influenced the theories they produced. Her careful reading of autobiographical sources and her innovative analysis set new standards for scholarship in the study of eminent lives. This beautifully written book is a must-read for anybody interested in the nature and origins of personality theory, the history of psychology, or the psychological study of

the individual person." •Dan P. McAdams, Ph.D. Northwestern University "Amy Demorest has put the person back at the center of personality theory....she shows how the individual psychologies and personal preoccupations of three giants in the field are reflected in their respective theories. Her accessible and fascinating study will be valued by undergraduate and graduate students, academic psychologists, psychotherapists, and others interested in the origins of seminal ideas." •Nancy McWilliams, Ph.D. Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey "This book is a winner....Professor Demorest tells compelling stories which draw readers in....She writes about the most influential thinkers in the field of psychology.... in a way that brings them to life... and she presents a model that can be applied to every major theorist, as well as every other person we meet in life." •Richard P. Halgin, Ph.D. University of Massachusetts, Amherst

I found this a very well-written, insightful, concise, engaging study of its topic: how personal life experiences shaped Rogers' and Skinner's theories. I found the study of Skinner alone worth the price of the book. And the section on Rogers was equally excellent. Unfortunately, however, I can't recommend the section on Freud. As a Freud scholar, I know too much about how Freud used his defenses to lead us all astray, including his biographers. Comprehending him calls for a radically different approach than the author used here so skillfully and fruitfully in gaining insight into Rogers' & Skinner's lives and theory. Her study of Freud is not out of step with most other studies of him, but all of those studies are, in my opinion, out of step with Freud. A concise explanation of this observation can be found in "If Freud's Theory Be True...", an article in Psychological Reports 70, 611-620. She might also have paid more attention to the findings of Erwin's 1996 "A Final Accounting": no evidence for Freud's theory even after 100 years of investigation. Other than her section on Freud, hers is an exceptionally insightful and well-written book. Her main thesis, moreover, of an intimate connection between Freud's personal life and theory, will soon be demonstrated to be quite true.

A read that any Intern MFT or ASW will need to consider purchasing. Good book.

This is by far the best intro book on Freud, Skinner, and Rogers. It is concise and covers all the relevant facts in an easy read. I got this book as one of several for a research project and wound up using it for citation but also as an outstanding bibliography for other books and material. Demorest did a great job covering, in a minimal amount of pages, what other over-the-top blowhards take hundreds of pages to say. If you are taking a psychology intro, theories, cognitive, behavioral, or

psychoanalysis course, this book is well worth the investment. If there is a negative to be found here one might say that other psychologists and theorists could have been included and still been hundreds of pages under other academic offerings.

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