

An Analysis of Chandler Bing's Personality
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Chandler Muriel Bing, one of the main characters from the hit TV series "*FRIENDS*," was born April 8, 1968. His parents Nora Tyler Bing, an erotic novelist, and Charles "Helena Handbasket" Bing, a cross-dressing, homosexual burlesque star, provided an unstable home for young Chandler - they finally divorced on Thanksgiving of his ninth year. After college, Chandler moves to New York where he meets his best friend, Joey Tribbiani. Chandler and Joey live across the hall from Monica and Rachel - Monica's brother Ross, Chandler's college roommate, and Phoebe, Monica's previous roommate, are also a part of the gang. The show follows these six as they live their lives in New York City. Chandler is usually the comic relief of the show, with his inability to talk to women, frequent sarcastic comments, and general anxiety about everything. While his friends may accept his personality for what it is, the concepts and approaches of Freudian, Freudian, and Trait theorists can help us understand how Chandler's personality was formed.

First, let's use the ideas of Sigmund Freud to analyze Chandler's character. Freud believed that on our way to adulthood, we each went through certain Psychosexual stages of Development, if one were to struggle with a specific stage, they may develop a fixation - or the tying up of psychic energy that leads to the inability to function normally. It is my belief that Chandler may have fixations in two of Freud's stages of Psychosexual development. Firstly, the oral stage. This stage is during the first 18 months of life, during this time, the primary erogenous zones are the mouth, lips, and tongue. Traumatic experiences during this stage have led Chandler to develop an oral personality, in that he is dependent on others and possesses an infantile need

for oral satisfaction. He satisfies this need through excessive smoking and frequent touching of the mouth.

Next comes the phallic stage, this is when the primary erogenous zones are the genitals. According to Freud, during this stage boys must overcome the Oedipus Complex - an attraction to their opposite sexed parent - and begin to identify with their same-sex parent. Chandler probably struggled to connect with his father, who was homosexual and frequently dressed as a woman when he would pick his son up from school. A fixation in this stage can lead to a person exhibiting qualities generally displayed by the opposite sex. This helps us explain why Chandler is the most effeminate of the men on "*FRIENDS*". For example, during season 6, once Chandler and Monica have moved in together, he does "girly" things with her like making potpourri ("The One with Ross's Teeth") and organizing CD's, that often end with the other guys making fun of him.

Freud would also say that Chandler's ego uses many different kinds of defense mechanisms to protect itself, some of these include intellectualization, projection, and denial. An example of his use of denial would be the first time he tells Monica he loves her. Chandler says, "You're so great, I love you!" then realizing what he has said, denies having spoken after saying she was a great person.

Moving on to the Neo-Freudian theories, we can apply Alfred Adler's idea of striving for superiority to Chandler's personality. Adler believed that this was the single motivating force behind all human action and that we all begin life with a strong sense of inferiority and spend the rest of our time trying to overcome that. Through his rough childhood, Chandler seems to have developed an inferiority complex, or a general feeling of inadequacy. He often compares himself

to his friends and has relentless anxiety about not being good enough. This is most often shown in Chandler's romantic relationships, he has trouble accepting that any woman could love him and, even after he and Monica are married, frequently brings up her past partners ("The One with the Secret Closet").

Another Neo-Freudian perspective we can apply to this case study is that of Erik Erikson. Erikson, who believed that personality development occurred in stages similar to Freud, presents the eight stages of personality development. He believed that these stages span the entirety of our lives and that we continued to develop our personality throughout our existence. Akin to Freud's idea of fixation during the psychosexual stages of development, Erikson understood that hardships during the early stages of your life could further affect your personality. Chandler most likely has difficulty in adolescence, during the stage of identity versus role confusion. Chandler had a troublesome relationship with his father during his teenage years, which lead him to lack a strong sense of identity. Though he is highly successful - occupying the important role of executive specializing in statistical analysis and data reconfiguration along with other high-grade positions - He frequently complains about how much he dislikes his job. This being said, even though he often mentions his disdain for his career, he refuses to quit and move on to something he might enjoy.

An additional Neo-Freudians concept that can be applied the personality of Chandler Bing is the idea of Attachment styles. Attachment styles are formed when we are very young, but are also visible in our personalities as we age and develop. Chandler displays an anxious-ambivalent attachment, this is formed when a child's caregiver is inconsistent in their responses, often the effect of parents dealing with their own problems - like divorce. Children

blame themselves for this inconsistency and develop self-models of doubt, insecurity, and uncertainty. Chandler is rarely sure of himself and is often anxious about others ideas about him. He attempts to act like a loner but unconsciously craves social contact and love.

Our last frame of analysis is that of Trait theorists. Trait theorists describe the basic dimensions of personality as the degree to which a person possesses five specific traits, these are neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Chandler would rank higher in neuroticism because he is anxious and unstable. Also high scores in this trait are due to the experiencing of frequent emotional distress, which appears in many Chandler centered episodes. Chandler is closer to introverted because he doesn't like to go out and meet new people, he always hangs out with the same friends, has difficulty talking to new people - especially women. This is shown through his relationship with Janice. Chandler and Janice date on and off for several seasons, a trait theorist may say this is due to his anxiety about meeting new people. Chandler lacks openness, seeing as how he prefers the familiar over the new. He would rate lower on agreeableness. Due to his rocky childhood, Chandler is skeptical and untrusting, often requiring valid proof before believing something. Chandler is easily distracted and frequently careless, giving him a low conscientious score. For example, when his boss complains about the large pile of paperwork on his desk, Chandler suggests he simply throw it in the shredder and claim he never received it ("The One With Rachel's Date"). His boss laughs, thinking this is some of Chandler's sarcastic humor, but it is clear this is something he participates in regularly.

While Chandler's friends may question the development of his personality, we have many theories to help us understand how he came to be the way he is. From Freud's

psychosexual stages of development, shown by Chandler's addiction to smoking, to the Neo-Freudian ideas of striving for superiority, exemplified in his romantic relationships, and attachment styles, created through Chandler's unstable relationships with his parents, as well as Trait theorists, who show where Chandler ranks on the continuum of the Big 5, the concepts of personality psychologists can help us understand a wide variety of characters.

References

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