

Causes and Consequences of Introvert Personality: A Study in Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl*

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Abstract

The researcher is trying to analyse the causes and consequences of Introvert personality by studying the character of Cath Avery in Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl*. Psychoanalyst Carl Jung found his theory of introversion in a practical way by analysing the approach of introvert to the external world objectively. According to Jung, personality is based on four pairs of opposite types in which one of the pairs is introvert and extrovert. He describes introvert as being more focused on the internal world of reflection, thoughtful and insightful. In *Fangirl*, Cath is an introvert who feels insecure and bad about herself because of the impact of social environment over her personality. Despite all the hardships, Cath could able to publish her fanfiction book because of the constant encouragement from her boyfriend Levi. Introvert is a personality build up by temperament and environment. Though the temperament cannot change, personality changes with change in environment. The social environment plays a major role in the causes and consequences of the personality.

Keywords: Introvert Personality, Rainbow Rowell, *Fangirl*, Cath Avery, Carl Jung, Personality Traits, Psychoanalytic Criticism.

Introduction

Introverts is a personality trait which has specific attitudes such as reserved, thoughtfulness, hesitant of being connected with society, prefers solitude, keeps emotions in private. They feel comfortable in small groups of familiar people, mostly prefers to be alone and get energized in their own company. In this research paper, the researcher analyses the causes of introvert personality and its misconceptions by analysing the character of Cath Avery in Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl*. Rainbow Rowell is an American writer who was born in February 24, 1973. She is popular for young adult and adult contemporary novels. Her novels including *Eleanor & Parks* (2012), *Fangirl* (2013) and *Carry On* (2015) have been critically reviewed publicly. "Introverts are outnumbered as three to one" (Olsen 15). About one third of the population is occupied by introverts. The remaining 75% is populated with extroverts, significantly dominating over the other. In this ratio, in the novel *Fangirl*, Rowell has added four main characters namely, Cath, Wren, Levi, Reagen and among the four, Cath is an introvert and the other three are extroverts. In this case, the traits which the extroverts seemingly do not possess is considered as unhealthy traits, negatively interpreted as disable, rejected and it comes under the need-to-change category.

The extrovert traits are most valued and appreciated. The loud ones are always framed to be brave and intelligent. Right from the job interviews to leadership position, people are always looking for extroverts. Their eyes have been closed to the fact that introverts too have distinct skills and abilities to present the best in the world. Slowly, introverts began to inhale these toxic lies about themselves that they are disable and different from others. But ironically, introversion is a temperament which is made up of biological factors that induce how we respond to the world. Though biological factors involve in the cause of introversion, social environment makes introverts to become more introverted influencing the introverts to believe in accepted lies about themselves. The sad reality is many Introverts fail to acknowledge that this personality is a natural trait which is absolutely normal and common among humans. In Fangirl, Cath without acknowledging that she has got the introvert personality she feels badly about herself as crazy and abnormal too in certain situations.

In the early 1900s, Carl Jung developed the theory of introversion and extroversion while he was working with two pioneering psychologist Alfred Alder, the psychotherapist and Sigmund Freud, the neurologist. Jung noticed that both of their personal assimilation towards the same patient seems entirely different and they ended up in developing two opposite theory. Jung keenly focused on their personal orientation and its approaches and he came out with a separate theory. Jung found that Freud is extroverted as his orientation directs outwardly towards the external world. On the other hand, Alder is found introverted as his personal orientation is based on the internal stimuli such as emotions, thoughts and feelings as his theory is based on the internal struggle of inferiority complex. Jung continued to work on the theory with much deeper analysis and found that everyone is born with a temperament feature that places them on a continuum between very extroverted and very introverted. No one will fall under the category of completely introverted or completely extroverted. If such a case occurs, the person might suffer from lunacy. Jung felt that one could adapt the best of the world if they could move on the continuum, introverting and extroverting when needed. However, he recognized that human beings are normally pulled in one direction more than the other thereby becoming either an introvert or an extrovert. He also found that being in any part of continuum is healthy except being in both the extremes.

The biological factors may involve in shaping the introvert, however there are lots of social factors which affects the personality to some extent. Temperament like Introversion and Extroversion cannot change into one another. Temperament and environment shapes the personality. Temperament does not change, but personality changes with the change in environment. To be more precise, either introvert or extrovert personality, they can be changed into one another according to environment and circumstances. "Personality can become modified over time as environmental events occur. Our perceptions of the world and responses to it can change to a greater or lesser extent depending on experiences in our life" (Granneman 37). Besides, Social environment plays a major role in making an introvert to become more introverted or even the non-introverts to acquire the introverted traits.

Introverts' need for solitude is often wrongly gotten as anti-social. "Our need for alone time is seen as unsociable. Unhealthy, even" (Granneman 51). Introverts lose their energy easily in energy consuming external activities including going for parties, being in crowds, having conversation with unknowns as they are so sensitive toward external stimulation. When they are drained out of energy, they may feel an urge to be in solitude or minimally stimulating environment to recharge their battery. This is commonly called as introvert hangover. "The introvert hangover could also be called 'social burnout' or a 'social hangover.' No matter what we call it, an introvert hangover can be rough" (Granneman 60). Many introverts who are not aware of this hangover feel frustrated for their inability to be with crowd or in party for long time like others. In the novel Fangirl, Cath resists herself getting out for a party in her college and chooses to be shut alone in her room.

“It had sounded like the whole campus was up partying. Cath felt under siege in her empty dorm room” (Rowell 17). But Cath is not anti-social like her roommate Reagen thought of her. She defends for herself that she is having lot of friends. But Reagen is not ready to believe her by noticing over her preference over solitude for all the time. If Cath is being anti-social, she would not have conversed with her fanfiction readers in online nor it is possible to earn more fans for her fanfiction. She enjoys replying to their comments and giving her updates. Also, she feels comfortable with Levi, who never thought of her as weird like others, though she thinks she behaved like such a one. Thus, they socialize differently and love to be with anyone who they feel more comfortable with.

Introverts are considered as shy but shyness and introversion is entirely different. “Shyness is the fear of negative judgement, and introversion is a preference for quiet, minimally stimulating environment” (Gerth 33) Shyness is the fear of wrongly judged by anyone.. “Both introverts and extroverts can be shy, schizoid, or highly sensitive”(Olsen 43). Introverts hate being in spotlight as they avoid social attention that would cost them their energy. They may need someone to encourage them to express their potential. But unfortunately, the society believes them as shy and denies them from the opportunities to bring their potentials to light. In Cath’s life, Levi is being a constant encourager, keeps on encouraging her writing though the stuffs like gay mages which she is writing appears ridiculous to him. Levi remains as a backbone for her achievement by giving her space to write, hearing her fanfiction interestingly and encouraging her to do more. His support and encouragement bear the fruit in her achievement of completing her fanfiction in the end and the fiction for her writing course that she planned to give up. If the environment continues to wrongly judge them as shy, unable, they might have the chance to develop fear of being wrongly judged by anyone. All the shy people are believed to be introverts and the introverts may become shy by the continuing wrong judgments from society about their attitude as they concern more over what others think of them.

Introverts’ preference over solitude is misunderstood as isolation and social anxiety. Social anxiety is different from introversion and isolation is different from solitude. “Social isolation is a struggle, but the capacity for solitude is a strength” (Gerth 91). Solitude is bliss for introverts. Reflecting, observing, analysing, earning peace without being disturbed by anyone is solitude for them. Solitude makes them to spend their time in productive and constructive way. Creativity works to their extent in solitude. Because, they are devoid of any interruptions and can have a deep analysis over things and can involve them completely in whatever they might be doing. Cath can write 10,000 words in a day being in solitude. She jumps into her fictional world playing with the fictional characters. She lives there, expresses her emotions over them in her writing and no wonder, her fanfiction steals thousand’s attention that they wait eagerly for her next episode. And coming to social anxiety, it is a mental disorder of feeling anxiety over social interactions. Fear, shy, nervousness and dizziness, all comes as one under social anxiety. Introversion is getting over stimulated by external activities and getting energized by internal activities. Introverts socialize with small crowd, feels no shy in conversing, but feel the need to leave the crowd soon even though they enjoy, to recharge their social battery. They think more before responding, feel drained of getting social attention, avoid eye contact with anyone and hate small talks. “There was a girl at the sinks, desperately trying to make a friendly eye contact. Cath pretended not to notice”(Rowell 18).

Introverts can strive in the world of extrovert if at all they find their potentials and special ability as a consequence of introversion. To conclude, introversion is not under the need to change into something else. If the introverts force themselves to change, they will be ended in exhausting their energy. Introverts can find the strength of their personality and do best with it. Jung believed that it is harmful to force someone outside of the natural range of his or her temperament that he found that this may cause mental illness. That is why most of the introverts feel ignorant and deviant from

the crowd. Therefore, if introverts remain being introverts without bothering about the society, finding their strength and ability in introversion, they too can achieve like many proved in the past.

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