

Psychosexual theory

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Evaluate the extent to which Freud's theory of psychosexual development can help us to understand a client's presenting issue? The meaning of the psychosexual theory has nothing to do with sexuality or sex in terms of reproduction, but is referred to in meaning as anything that gives pleasure to the body such as a hug, taste, food, this is according to Freud. Freud believed that early childhood has an effect on the future life of a person there are five stages he believed that a person went through physiologically and psychologically.

The physiology is based on human instinct to survive, the psychology is the emotional/mental interpretation of the act and the pleasure that it provides. This was the birth of psychodynamics the link between physiology and psychology, the motivation behind the behavioural action. Freud's psychosexual theory is based on child development from birth through to adulthood. The idea is the association between the physiological developments being linked to the psychological development in early childhood.

The first stage is set at birth to 18 months, it is the oral stage, this area is based on the mouth and the need to eat to survive also coupled with the pleasure that follows through with taste, this is instigated by breastfeeding. Babies enjoy breastfeeding it is soothing, it feels good and it tastes good, this is the first pleasure that babies have. This stage focuses on the mouth as babies learn through taste; they put things in their mouths to learn. It is at this stage that a child learns that the mouth gives instant pleasure through taste and that food gives pleasure.

Following the oral stage is the anal stage which is based on the anus; this stage normally occurs around 18 months to three years old. This stage is based on control, this is the control of the bowels being able to control when and where to excrete. The pleasure principle here is based around potty training, the emphasis placed on the child to control when they need to release themselves and the parent displaying expectation on the suitability and necessity of having control over the bowels and taking ownership of actions based around potty training.

Depending on how this is executed the developing child will learn the control factor and get pleasure for being able to exercise their control over this. Stage three is the phallic stage this is from ages 3-5, at this stage the child starts to realise that there is a difference between boys and girls; it is here that the developing child sees a difference in their genitals relating to the parent from the opposite sex. Females start to become aware that they don't have a penis and sense there is a difference in terms of strength between men and women.

Males start to become aware that they are strong and have a sense of protection regarding their mother. This can be understood in terms that girls seek protection from their fathers and see their mother as a rival and this follows in reverse regarding sons and mothers. Stage four from ages 5 to adolescence is latency it is the lull stage where nothing further happens in terms of development in the psychosexual theory. Stage five genital stage this is the adult sexual phase, this is where the developing person experiences sex, romance, love, crushes and friendships.

The relationship of the five stages manifested through to adulthood is as follows. During the oral stage should there be a disruption such as feeding was unsuccessful or issues to do with health pertaining to the oral area then it would manifest through the individual's behaviour resulting in direct issues regarding the mouth. The conflict here is weaning the child off the breast towards solid foods, if this process is handled in a less satisfying way towards the developing child, the outcome can be an anxiety lead habitual acts.

This could result in chewing pencils, thumb sucking, gum chewing, smoking, over eating, not necessarily in an order but the idea is if an individual becomes fixated in the oral stage they may have some anxiety that would be displayed in one of the above actions. This stems from the idea that the individual was not breast feed enough or there was a disruption of some kind relating to feeding or weaning was unsuccessful and caused issues with feeding, due to this need not being met as an infant the need manifests itself in some other behavioural type.

The anal stage relates to control and is the stage where the concept of potty training was either successful or not, resulting in the individual being either "anal retentive" meaning up tight and rigid when it comes to neatness and organisation. This is the idea that the individual enjoyed their potty training. On the other hand depending on how the training was administered. For if the child was not forthcoming in their potty training or the training was not handled appropriately or was very easy going and care free, the idea is that the individual would be disorganised, messy and have possible anxiety with anything to do with passing bowel movements. The phallic stage relates to relationships with the opposite sex through the understanding of the

relationship between the individual and the parent of the opposite sex. This is the origins for the Oedipus and Electra complex stage. Boys tend to want to protect their mothers and come into conflict with their fathers as a means to assert themselves. Girls seek the protection of their fathers while they rival with their mothers for his attention.

The child suspects that the same sex parent knows about their attraction towards the opposite sex and hates them for it. The latency stage is the stage of pure childish playfulness, there is no pleasure factor here but child growth such as school, play, fun and basic child features. The focus is on interacting and taking in their surroundings. This is based on repression driving from the stage prior to this one, because of the awareness but the lack of knowledge about the differences between male and females, the child tends to repress any thoughts feelings or concerns and so begins the latency stage.

The genital stage is the sexuality process and the discovery of pleasure through the genitals, at this stage boys begin to masturbate and for some this can be uncontrollable. It is not uncommon for parents to reprimand a child for being caught too often with their hands down their pants. And the threats of castration are common to try and deter the boy from such impulsive acts. For girls the suspicion is based on their sexual development in terms of their physical being, breasts grow and the female form takes shape.

In this way, and for such reason, the child's feelings on the subject of his relationship with his parents, and their attitude towards his body and its future, may become divided. What Freud Really Said: An Introduction to His

Life and Thought: 1965 David Stafford-Clark: Hachette Digital: Location 1254
This theory is Freud's theory and although it has come into much dispute and criticism it is a theory that may not necessarily be utilised to its fullness however not completely disregarded. The ID the Ego and the Superego
These stages are portioned and governed by three powers of the mind that Freud believed to be within everyone.

The ID described as the self, instinctual and primitive, the Ego understood as the mediator, intelligent and sensible, and the Super Ego acts as the conscience it is institutional and ensures ethical actions. The ID which is known as the pleasure principle the, I want, I need is the driving factor towards getting our needs met, this is the selfish mode which informs us that we are hungry, lonely, sick. This factor has no relevance in the how are these needs to be met, but rather in the fact that these needs are present and need to be fulfilled.

The Ego facilitates the needs of the ID ensuring that it is in line with reality and acceptable to fulfil those needs that the ID manifests, the ID creates the desire and the Ego works out how to get the desires met in balance with society and appropriateness. The Super Ego is the conscience the moral side of the mind, it ensures that the morality is in place throughout the drive from the ID's desire to the Ego's will to get the desires met in accordance to appropriateness, the Super Ego balances the morality and acts as a reminder that behaviour should be managed in a moral standing.

This is the Freud analogy of the human mind and how it is motivated and managed by the individual. The oral stage is governed by the ID as this is the immediate survival stage such as feeding, then the Ego which develops
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during the oral stage which leads on to the next stage. By the anal stage the superego has developed hence the control over bowel movements and the potty training by a parent who may install certain values as to why big boys and girls use the toilet. By this stage the personality has now come into form.

The main criticism of these theories are that it has never been experimented or deemed true by means of observation, it is all Freud's ideas and thoughts on how the human psyche works, there is no evidence to prove it right or otherwise. The link between the psychosexual theory and adult neurotic behaviour Freud believed that any sign of neuroses stemmed from childhood, of which would indicate that there was a disruption or conflict during one of the five psychosexual stages.

This basically links the idea that there was an issue of some kind during childhood and this issue has caused a lasting unwelcome effect on the future wellbeing of an individual. The disruption would take the form of some kind of conflict, during one or more of the psychosexual stages, which could lead to a behavioural transference neuroses or narcissistic neuroses. Due to Freud's theory on the ID Ego and Superego the relationship between the three mind concepts is crucial to how the disruption or conflict was handled during the development of the psychosexual stages.

Due to this concept Freud based his belief on neuroses being related to a particular trauma suffered during childhood. The psychosexual stages are guides to pinpoint the particular issue giving it a shape and a link to assist in understanding certain behaviours and the possible reasons behind them. Applying the Psychosexual theory to the presenting issue The idea is to link

the presenting physiological behaviour to childhood growth of where there would have been a possible disruption or conflict.

So a client with abandonment issues who has a tendency to over eat to the point where it is damaging to both their physical and mental health. The psychosexual link would lead towards their oral stage, suggesting that from birth to 18 months the transitioning from breast feeding to solid food was unsuccessful or held some form of conflict or disruption. The idea is that because the client has an eating disorder coupled with feelings of abandonment suggests that they are fixated within the oral stage. This would be a basis to first understand the client and their issue from an open point of view.

Freud's psychosexual theories have never been tested so to apply it in full would be irresponsible to say the least. Ethically the use of the psychosexual theory is not always recommended for it holds a lot of emphasis on a sexual related basis. However because it holds a possible understanding for which to build rapport and get to a level of understanding with a client, it should not be totally ruled out. The psychosexual theory can be used to understand a client but to the extent that it offers an understanding towards the presenting issue, however this could not be the case with every client.

As Freud's theories were limited to certain classes and groups of people, the ramifications may be similar in respect to other classes and groups of people but they may differ completely. Due to cultural difference and ethnic origin coupled with tradition and religion from the vast amounts of different people in the world. The childhood growth from one individual to another could be very different, whereas culturally in some areas of the world breastfeeding

can last up until a child is 5 years old. How at this point is the psychosexual theory to be employed? How his form of childhood transitioning could be applied in any way to the psychosexual stages? The fact remains that due to its limitations of experimentation; it cannot be applied to everybody but instead used as a tool to better understand a client's presenting issues. Issues such as OCD, over eating, anorexia, IBS, anxiety, phobias, grief, habits and addictions can all be linked to the past events or experiences of a client's life. It may not necessarily be linked through the psychosexual theory but the link may very well be in the past holding a strong relevance in some form to a past experience.

For this reason alone the psychosexual theory can be used as an avenue to understand the client and the relationship between their presenting issue and their past. Here is where the psychodynamics of the clients frame work are interpreted and understood and possibly confronted and dealt with in order for the client and therapist to progress with some resolution. Criticisms of Freud The main areas of criticisms on the psychosexual theory and many other Freudian theories are that it has not been tested.

All of Freud's theories were based on his ideologies and internal beliefs, so it has no scientific creditability. No prognostic worth as to place the Oedipus and Electra complex on an individual that had an absent parent or was raised with same sex parents or in another less conventional family setting, how is their future behaviour to be determined. Freud based his analysis on the patients he had access to, this was not a wide variety of individuals and many of them were middleclass wives suffering from hysteria. This is just a few of the many controversial views on Freudian theory.

However along with these criticisms Freud claimed much recognition for his contributions to psychology. Before Freud there was no understanding of the mind and how it could possibly work, Freud opened the understanding to undertake that the human mind can operate on different levels. Freud gave birth to the importance of child psychological development and that children do have sexual feelings. Freud set the motion for the direction of psychology and the many areas of which can be explored, without Freud's theories there was no basis for psychology and its possibilities.

Freud gave direction and a starting point for many practitioners to base their understandings. Presenting issues and the psychosexual development theory The psychosexual development theory can prove useful in understanding a client's presenting issue, but only as a tool to base an understanding. This theory gives a platform to further develop the client and therapist relationship, it holds not scientific value and is far too controversial to rely upon as a workable useable theory for practice. But it does allow for understanding and gives light to uncovering an issue using psychodynamic therapy.