

# Psychoanalytic theory and tony soprano

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Soprano, the main character of the HBO series “ The Sopranos. ” This paper will attempt to contain specific examples in the show where the theory applies and as such the psychiatric session between Tony and his therapist will also be analyzed with the purpose of knowing the extent of application of Freud's theory.

The theory of personality developed by Freud that focused on repression and unconscious forces and included the concepts of infantile sexuality, resistance, transference, and division of the psyche into the id, ego, and superego, is hoped to be better understood in the fabricated character of Soprano as the head of the most powerful criminal organization in New Jersey. The Soprano character, played by James Gandolfini, is the series' exceedingly complex protagonist and as such is the only character to appear in every episode of the show as the Boss of the DiMeo Family.

Throughout the series, Tony Soprano has to juggle the ongoing needs of both his personal family and his professional family and in these episodes and sequences this paper will analyze the indication of the Freud's theory. Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory and Tony Soprano Sigmund Freud was born Sigismund Schlomo Freud on May 6, 1856 and until his death on September 23, 1939 was an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist.

He founded the Psychoanalytic School of Psychology and was best known for his theories of the unconscious mind, especially involving the mechanism of repression; his redefinition of sexual desire as the primary motivational energy of human life, directed toward a wide variety of objects; and his therapeutic techniques, especially his theory of transference in the

therapeutic relationship and the presumed value of dreams as sources of insight into unconscious desires.

Commonly referred to as "the father of psychoanalysis," Freud's work has been highly influential, popularizing such notions as the unconscious, the Oedipus complex, defense mechanisms, Freudian slips and dream symbolism. However great and despite his contributions, numerous critics disputed Freud's works and in particular the Psychoanalytic Theory because of its characterization as complex counterfeit of science. Also a physiologist, medical doctor and psychologist, Freud was generally recognized as one of the most influential and authoritative thinkers of the twentieth century.

In elaborating his Psychoanalytic Theory, Freud stated that the mind is a complex energy-system, the structural investigation of which is proper province of psychology. He articulated and refined the concepts of the unconscious, of infantile sexuality, of repression, and proposed a tripartite account of the mind's structure, all as part of a radically new conceptual and therapeutic frame of reference for the understanding of human psychological development and the treatment of abnormal mental conditions.

Notwithstanding the multiple manifestations of psychoanalysis as it exists today, it can in almost all fundamental respects be traced directly back to Freud's original work. Further, Freud's innovative treatment of human actions, dreams, and indeed of cultural artifacts as invariably possessing implicit symbolic significance has proven to be extraordinarily fertile, and has had massive implications for a wide variety of fields, including

anthropology, semiotics, and artistic creativity and appreciation in addition to psychology.

However, Freud's most important and frequently re-iterated claim, that with psychoanalysis he had invented a new science of the mind, remains the subject of much critical debate and controversy. (Jones, 1981).

Psychoanalysis Based on Freud, Psychoanalysis is a set of techniques for exploring underlying motives and a method of treating various mental disorders. It comprises several interlocking theories concerning the functioning of the mind.

The term also refers to a specific type of treatment where the analyst, upon hearing the thoughts of the "analysand" (analytic patient), formulates and then explains the unconscious basis for the patient's symptoms and character problems. Unconscious functioning was first described by Freud who modified his theories several times over a period of almost 50 years (1889-1939) of attempting to treat patients who suffered with mental problems. During psychoanalytic treatment, the patient tells the analyst various thoughts and feelings.

The analyst listens carefully, formulates, then intervenes to attempt to help the patient develop insight into unconscious factors causing the problems. The specifics of the analyst's interventions typically include confronting and clarifying the patient's pathological defenses, wishes and guilt. Freud devised it in Vienna in the 1890s because he was interested in finding an effective treatment for patients with neurotic or hysterical symptoms.

This new theory, which addressed the cause of neurotic symptoms — phobias, compulsions, obsessions, depressions, and "hysterical" conversions — amongst others, suggested that such problems were created by conflicts among various wishes and guilt, which produced anxiety. Freud and Psychoanalysis In 1886, Freud abandoned the hypnosis form of treatment, in favor of a treatment where the patient talked through his or her problems. This came to be known as the "talking cure." The "talking cure" is widely seen as the basis of psychoanalysis.

In his 40s, Freud "had numerous psychosomatic disorders as well as exaggerated fears of dying and other phobias" (Corey 2000, p. 67). During this time Freud was involved in the task of exploring his own dreams, memories, and the dynamics of his personality development. During this self-analysis, he came to realize the hostility he felt towards his father (Jacob Freud), who had died in 1896, and "he also recalled his childhood sexual feelings for his mother (Amalia Freud), who was attractive, warm, and protective" (Corey 2000, p.

67). Corey considered this time of emotional difficulty to be the most creative time in Freud's life. In a more vivid identification of the personality of Freud, Historian Peter Gay (2000) said that the former opened a window on the unconscious where he said, lust, rage and repression battle for supremacy and changed the way we view ourselves. There is nothing new about such embittered confrontations; they have dogged Freud's footsteps since he developed the cluster of theories he would give the name of psychoanalysis.

His fundamental idea that all humans are endowed with an unconscious in which potent sexual and aggressive drives, and defenses against them, struggle for supremacy, as it were, behind a person's back has struck many as a romantic, scientifically unprovable notion. His contention that the catalog of neurotic ailments to which humans are susceptible is nearly always the work of sexual maladjustments, and that erotic desire starts not in puberty but in infancy, seemed to the respectable nothing less than obscene.

His dramatic evocation of a universal Oedipus complex, in which (to put a complicated issue too simply) the little boy loves his mother and hates his father, seems more like a literary conceit than a thesis worthy of a scientifically minded psychologist. As he pursued his medical researches, he came to the conclusion that the most intriguing mysteries lay concealed in the complex operations of the mind.

By the early 1890s, he was specializing in "neurasthenics" (mainly severe hysterics); they taught him much, including the art of patient listening. At the same time he was beginning to write down his dreams, increasingly convinced that they might offer clues to the workings of the unconscious, a notion he borrowed from the Romantics. He saw himself as a scientist taking material both from his patients and from himself, through introspection. Freud was intent not merely on originating a sweeping theory of mental functioning and malfunctioning.

He also wanted to develop the rules of psychoanalytic therapy and expand his picture of human nature to encompass not just the couch but the whole culture. As to the first, he created the largely silent listener who

encourages the analysand to say whatever comes to mind, no matter how foolish, repetitive or outrageous, and who intervenes occasionally to interpret what the patient on the couch is struggling to say. The efficacy of analysis remains a matter of controversy, though the possibility of mixing psychoanalysis and drug therapy is gaining support.

Freud's ventures into culture - history, anthropology, literature, art, sociology, the study of religion - have proved little less controversial, though they retain their fascination and plausibility and continue to enjoy a widespread reputation. Tony Soprano Played by James Gandolfini, Tony Soprano is a fictional character on the HBO TV series The Sopranos. The series' exceedingly complex protagonist, he is the only character to appear in every episode of the show. He is the Boss of the DiMeo Family.

Throughout the series, Tony Soprano has to juggle the ongoing needs of both his personal family and his professional family. He has a volatile relationship with his wife, Carmela and a loving if somewhat strained relationship with his two children, Meadow and Anthony, Jr. Passionate and often hotheaded, he is nonetheless intelligent and struggles to conduct his personal and professional lives with reason rather than passion. Tony is often portrayed as a loving father he attends his children's sporting events and wants them to be safe, happy and to have every opportunity in life.

He hopes that both his children will escape the life of crime he has led. The Theory and the Character Examples of Freud's theory of the unconscious mind, especially involving the mechanism of repression; his redefinition of sexual desire and his therapeutic techniques were manifested in selected episodes of the series. In Season 1 he is moved close to tears by her <https://assignbuster.com/psychoanalytic-theory-and-tony-soprano/>

performance at a choir recital. He often tells people about her aspiration to become a pediatrician. Tony has suffered from panic attacks that sometimes cause him to lose consciousness since his childhood.

He has his first on-screen panic attack while cooking sausages at his son's birthday party- this occurs in a flashback in the pilot episode. Tony loses consciousness and causes a small explosion when he drops a bottle of lighter fluid onto the coals. Tony describes the experience of the panic attack as feeling like he had "ginger ale in his skull". This prompts him to seek help for the attacks. After extensive testing that includes an MRI scan and blood work no physical cause can be found so Dr. Cusamano referred Tony to psychiatrist, Dr.

Melfi. Tony's referral to therapy allowed a discussion of his thoughts and feelings away from both aspects of his life — this forum for reaching into the characters thoughts has been described as a Greek chorus and key to the viewers understanding of the character. Tony was initially very resistant to the idea that there was a psychiatric cause for his symptoms. He resented being in therapy and refused to accept the diagnosis of panic attacks given him by the neurologists who had investigated his illness. Tony begins to open up once Dr.

Melfi explains the doctor-patient confidentiality rules. He tells her about the stress of his business life - he has a feeling that he has come in at the end of something and describes a reverence for times past. Tony leaves out the violence associated with his criminal career. Tony tells Dr. Melfi a story about ducks landing in his pool. He also tells her about his mother, Livia, who is relentlessly pessimistic and cynical, at once demanding and resentful of



assistance. By the end of the first session Tony has admitted that he feels depressed but storms out when Dr.

Melfi presses him further about the relationship between his symptoms and the ducks. In the episode "46 Long" they continue to discuss Tony's mother and her difficulties living alone. Tony admits that he feels guilty because his mother could not be allowed to live with his family. We learn that he has been left to care for his mother alone by his sisters. When Dr. Melfi asks him to remember good experiences from his childhood he has difficulty. It is clear that Tony's perception of his mother does not meet with the reality of her personality.

He also shows that he blames Carmela for preventing his mother from living with them. Later they discuss Livia's car accident and Melfi suggests depression may have contributed to the accident - Tony misunderstands her and becomes angry. Tony has a panic attack while visiting his mother's home after she moves to Green Grove. In a later session Dr. Melfi pushes Tony to admit he has feelings of anger towards his mother and he again storms out. During this episode Tony introduces the concept of him acting like the sad clown - happy on the outside but sad on the inside.

In the episode, "Denial, Anger, Acceptance," Tony discusses Jackie's cancer with Dr. Melfi. She tries to use it as an example of Tony's negative thinking contributing to his depression. Tony becomes angry and storms out because he feels she is trying to trick him and manipulate his thoughts using the pictures that decorate her office. After Jackie worsens and Tony is called a Frankenstein by a business associate he returns to therapy to discuss these things with Dr. Melfi — she asks him if he feels like a monster. In the “

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Fortunate Son” episode, Tony discusses a childhood memory of an early panic attack.

He saw his father and uncle mutilate Mr Satriale, the local butcher, and later fainted at a family dinner consisting of free meat from the butcher. Dr. Melfi makes a connection between meat and Tony's panic attacks and also explores his mother's attitude to the fruits of his father's labor. Later Dr. Melfi tries prescribing Lithium as a mood stabilizer. In the episode “ Isabella” Tony sinks into a severe depressive episode and experiences hallucinations — he sees a beautiful Italian woman named Isabella in his neighbor's garden.

Tony sees Isabella several times during the episode and later learns that she never existed. Melfi theorizes that Isabella was an idealized maternal figure that Tony's subconscious produced because of he was deeply upset at his own mother's actions at the time. In “ I Dream of Jeannie Cusamano” episode, Tony abruptly ends his therapy and convinces Dr. Melfi to go into hiding when he discovers that his Uncle Junior has found out about their sessions. The stage on which its drama unfolds is the relationship between Tony and Dr.

Melfi, a duet blistering with so much heat and so authentic in its depiction of what actually happens in psychoanalytic psychotherapy where you feel as if you are in the room yourself eavesdropping on another patient's session. The relationship between Tony and Dr. Melfi has been up-and-down, with Tony reaching a level of comfort with Dr. Melfi that he has never experienced with anyone else before, not even his wife. This closeness leads Tony to have something of a “ crush” on Dr. Melfi, something that is unattainable. However, the “ prying” from Dr.

Melfi is uncomfortable for Tony and he often turns sarcastic and antagonistic towards her, leading to an ongoing strain in their relationship. During the episode “ The Second Coming,” aired in part II of season six, Melfi's own therapist suggests to her that therapy like which she administers to Tony has been considered to be an enabler to certain sociopathic personalities. In the episode " 46 Long" they continue discuss Tony's mother and her difficulties living alone. Tony admits that he feels guilty because his mother could not be allowed to live with his family. When Dr.

Melfi asks him to remember good experiences from his childhood he has difficulty. It is clear that Tony's perception of his mother does not meet with the reality of her personality. He also shows that he blames Carmela for preventing his mother from living with them. Later they discuss Livia's car accident and Melfi suggests depression may have contributed to the accident - Tony misunderstands her and becomes angry. Tony has a panic attack while visiting his mother's home after she moves to Green Grove. In a later session Dr. Melfi pushes Tony to admit he has feelings of anger towards his mother and he again storms out.

During this episode Tony introduces the concept of him acting like the sad clown - happy on the outside but sad on the inside. Finally, in the penultimate episode of the series, “ The Blue Comet,” Melfi severs her relationship with Tony as his therapist. In psychoanalytic terms, Tony is split, so split that he is an ambulatory. One part of himself – the thrill-seeking mob boss trying to cling by his brass knuckles to a world where nobody plays by the rules anymore – is alienated from the other part, the devoted family man

trying to survive in the quicksand of Nero-fiddling-while-Rome-burns middle-class America.

It's a toss-up which culture is more empty, dysfunctional and corrupt. In any event, the breach is causing him grievous suffering. Tony tries to put up a wall between the two worlds but inevitably they start to bleed into each other. The more he tries to ignore or paper over the cracks, the more his psyche rebels. He has anxiety attacks, blacks out, tumbles into a depression. Tony may be in denial about why his system is on red alert but it is impossible to watch the show without developing an armchair theory. Tony's gangster personal provides him with constant excitement and action, a sense of power and control, a definition of masculinity.

Through violence rationalized as business or impersonal soldiering he also gets to express his considerable unacknowledged rage without encroaching on his alter ego as benevolent husband and father. But when the center fails to hold, the result is panic, depression, self-hatred, sexual collapse and engulfing, ungovernable anger. Tony's panic attacks are an undeniable signal that his defenses are deserting him. Psychoanalysis is about transformation. When transformation happens, it can seem quite magical. It can involve gaining the ability to make previously unthinkable choices or living a life that once felt beyond reach.

It can be about achieving the freedom to be oneself instead of feeling inhibited, stuck and frightened. It can be about something as simple and earth-breaking as locating oneself differently in the world . If there is change, people are not the same as they used to be. References Bender, William. (2006). The Last Aria of Tony Soprano. The New York Times. Berman, J. <https://assignbuster.com/psychoanalytic-theory-and-tony-soprano/>

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