

Film Ordinary People with Psychodynamic Models Applied

Feng Zhu

Alliance University

GCN 502 Theories and Foundations

George James Ramos

02/07/2023

Film Ordinary People with Psychodynamic Models Applied

Psychodynamic theory is a psychological theory that Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) created, and his subsequent followers expanded to explain the roots of human behavior. The psychodynamic approach encompasses all psychological theories that state human functioning depends on the interaction of impulses and drives inside the individual, particularly unconscious ones, and between the various personality structures. Unconscious motivations have a significant impact on our behavior and emotions. In Freud's view (1915), the unconscious mind is the primary driver of human action. The unconscious mind is the significant portion you can not see, similar to an iceberg. According to psychodynamic theory, our personalities are significantly shaped by childhood experiences and how they affect our adult life. Childhood trauma can persist in the unconscious and produce issues in adulthood. As the impulses are altered by different conflicts at various points in childhood, personality is developed.

The id, ego, and super-ego are the three components that makeup personality. The intuitive personality is known as the id, which comprises every biological personality trait at birth. The ego becomes a mediator between the id's perceptions and the outside world, which helps people make decisions. The superego combines social norms and values that one picks up from others and their parents. The id and superego, two aspects of the unconscious mind, are always at odds with the conscious mind - the ego. This conflict causes anxiety, which the ego might manage by employing protective mechanisms.

The psychodynamic approach could be applied to the unconscious dynamics of Conrad's behavior. His family, an American middle-class family, lost their oldest son Buck due to a car accident. After that, Conrad occasionally exhibited self-destructive behavior, a form of self-punishment. He dreamed about Buck drowning in the sea, but Conrad failed to save him. It

could be hypothesized that Conrad felt guilty that Buck was dead while Conrad himself was alive. Conrad kept his distance from his best friend, who was also a good friend of Buck, to try to avoid bad feelings about missing Buck. Conrad wanted to numb his feelings. He used his ego-defense mechanism of repression to fight his anxiety. While keeping a distance from his old friends, Conrad also explored new friends and relationships. He wanted to be heard and to be connected. Conrad felt unhappy when Jeannie, the girl he liked, laughed when other boys come into the restaurant and played with her. It could be hypothesized that he was not the boy who got enough attention from his mother. The feeling of a child not being loved still affected him here and now. He wanted his mother to connect with him and love him, but he felt his mother's love for his dead brother Buck was stronger than for him. His childhood affected him, and he always had to be the perfect boy who managed and controlled. It could be further hypothesized that he believes he has to be a good boy to be loved in this family.

The techniques I would choose to counsel Conrad are free association, dream analysis, and interpretation. Free association, in which Conrad could be encouraged to express whatever comes to his mind, is the technique I could use to unlock his suppressed feelings in the unconscious. Conrad's dream reflected his intense feelings for the loss of his brother Buck. Through dream analysis, he could break through the repression that blocked the material from consciousness. The interpretation could extend his consciousness and help make sense of his life when appropriately timed.

The Psychodynamic approach works because Conrad demonstrated the necessary level of ego power for this treatment. He does not resist talking to Dr. Burger after his second session. To bring his unconsciousness to the surface, a therapist could continue strengthening his ego, which will significantly modify his personality.

References

Corey, G. (2021). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy* (10th ed.). Cengage.

Ordinary People [Video]. (1980).

https://www.amazon.com/Ordinary-People-Donald-Sutherland/dp/B00AALLU08/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2DCW2YC69IFLB&keywords=ordinary+people&qid=1675562867&s=instant-video&srefix=ordin%2Cinstant-video%2C228&sr=1-1