

Ordinary People Paper: The Psychoanalytic Theory

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The Psychoanalytic theory is one founded as a theory of personality organization and the dynamic of personality development. According to the textbook, our human nature is determined by irrational forces, unconscious motivations, and biological and instinctual drives that are exhibited through our behavior (Corey, 2016). Regarding personality, the psychoanalytical perspective of Sigmund Freud views personality as three systems that work synchronized. Those are the id, ego, and superego.

The id represents untamed drives and impulses associated with the biological component. The ego attempts to organize and mediate between the id and the reality of dangers posed by impulses of the id. Lastly, the way we protect ourselves from the dangers of our own drives is to establish a superego. The superego is the internalized social element entrenched in what the person imagines to be the expectations of parental figures.

In order to understand our behavior and problems with personality, Sigmund Freud developed the concepts of unconscious and conscious thoughts. According to the textbook, Corey (2016) explains that the earlier stages of development are predictors of how individuals shape their interpersonal relationships in the future.

During the early stages of development, children who have not correctly developed a sense of self can develop mental disorders. In terms of mental disorders, there has been a lens placed on the development of narcissistic personality disorder along with borderline personality disorder as outcomes of incorrect development. Narcissistic Personality Disorder is characterized by a grandiose and exaggerated sense of self-importance and an

exploitative attitude toward others, which serve the purpose of concealing a weakened self-image. In terms of Borderline Personality Disorder, during the separation-individuation process, children have been hindered by parental rejection. Borderline Personality Disorder is characterized by instability, irritability, self-destructive acts, impulsive anger, and extreme mood shifts (Corey, 2016, p.81-82). This theory is a clinical method of treating psychopathology.

As I examined the main character Conrad in the film *Ordinary People*, he appeared to be a high school kid that continued to display ongoing symptoms of anxiety, low- self-esteem, worry, agitation, and disturbance when around people. These symptoms were highlighted in his hostility, inattention, aggression, and self-harming practices throughout the film. The film was able to capture these symptoms and behaviors in several instances toward his mother, swim teammates, father, and psychiatrist.

As a psychiatrist of Conrad, the application of the psychoanalytic theory leads me to utilize two techniques that I find effective for treating the symptoms displayed throughout the film. One effective technique identified is dream analysis. According to the textbook, dream analysis is an intervention applied to uncover unconscious content in hopes of providing the client insight into unresolved problems. In terms of interpreting dreams, the textbook explains that during sleep defenses are lowered which allows the repressed feeling to surface (Corey, 2016, p. 74).

Conrad expresses having dreams that were unpleasant in consecutive sessions. He continued to have trouble sleeping. As his psychiatrist, this would prompt me to engage in

the line of questioning that would provide me with data and insight into his dreams. During one of his sessions in the film, he relives the boat accident that continues to resurface in his dreams. As Conrad's emotional catharsis is displayed in the film, he points out that his brother was "screwing around in the thunderstorm" (Redford, 1980, 1:38:59). Conrad being able to identify the fault of his brother, provided him a psychological and emotional breakthrough from blaming himself for the death of his brother.

The second technique for application would be free association. According to the textbook, free association encompasses the encouragement of clients to verbally express their thought content presently, regardless of how negative or positive the thoughts may be. As reported in the textbook, the tool of free association is utilized to expose unconscious wishes, fantasies, conflicts, and motivation. Because the technique of free association provokes a person's past recollection of experiences and at times a catharsis, this will assist me with understanding and encountering Conrad's true feelings (Corey, 2016, p. 73).

In my opinion, the application of this theory would be useful in terms of the interventions that are theorized as tools. In addition, I believe that this theory does an in-depth analysis of the outcomes of personality based on the developmental stages of Sigmund Freud (psychosexual stages) and Erik Erikson (psychosocial stages). Furthermore, when clients are dealing with suicidal ideations, homicidal ideations, and interpersonal relationships like Conrad, pointing out coping skills, and defense mechanisms are important, especially at the adolescent age.

Reference

1. Corey, G. (2016). *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. 10th ed. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning US.
2. Redford, R. (1980). *Ordinary People*. Wildwood Enterprise.