Analysis of a Phobia of a Five-Year Old Boy aka: Little Hans

Freud
1909
According to Freud, personality set in early in life during childhood. Freud created stages of development called the “Psychosexual stages of development” Stages are named for the area of the body in which we receive pleasure
Psychosexual Stages of Development

- Oral Phase: 0-18 months old
- Anal Phase: 18-24 months old
- Phallic Phase: 3-5 years
  - Oedipus complex/Electra Crisis
  - Penis envy
  - Castration Anxiety
- Latency: 5 years - Puberty
- Genital: Puberty and beyond
- Stages of development
Personality According to Freud

• The ID, EGO, and SUPERCERGO

  • The ID: Contains instincts and psychic energy
  • Exists completely in our unconscious mind
  • Propelled by pleasure
  • Seeks gratification and fails to distinguish reality from fantasy.
Personality According to Freud

• Ego:
  – Partly in the conscious mind
  – Partly in the unconscious mind

• Driven by reality
  - The ego is aware of the real environment and the need to fit into it.
  - Delays gratification
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- How might your childhood affect your personality?
- What other factors might affect your personality?
Personality According to Freud

• Superego:
  – Partly in the unconscious mind and partly in the conscious
  – Our sense of right and wrong
    • Represents the internalizing of our parents’ rules and the rules of society
    • Disobeying the superego causes us to have anxiety
Example of Id, Ego, and Superego

• You have a big test in psychology tomorrow. You are at home studying. Your ID tells you, “Go to sleep, you are tired. Studying is no fun! Besides, isn’t Zack having a party?”

• Your superego replies, “Keep studying! You know it is the right thing to do! Yale is in your future!”

• Your ego compromises. “We’ll study for four more hours. Drop by the party, then get to bed.”
Defense Mechanisms

- Part of the ego’s job is to protect the conscious mind from the threatening thoughts buried in the unconscious mind.
- This is done with defense mechanisms or behaviors that protect people from anxiety.
Oedipus Complex

- Crisis of development
- During the Phallic stage, the child desires the opposite sex parent
- He fears punishment from the same sex parent, so he represses these desires into the unconscious
- In girls, this is called the Electra complex
Oedipus Complex

• Resolution is a defense mechanism called identification
  – We become like our same-sex parent, take on their behaviors, values, attitudes, etc.
• Freud says this is how we learn our gender roles & conscience.
• None of this is conscious but may surface in symbolism in dreams!
Reflective

• You and a partner are going to create a Facebook page for *Sigmund Freud*. This will be due on Friday this week. Be sure to research where he was from and his birthday!
Bell Ringer

• Bandura V. Freud
• Bandura is a behaviourist psychologist therefore believes that our behaviour is the result of environmental changes. Other behaviourist psychologists are Pavlov who believed we learn via association (Classical conditioning), and Skinner who says we learn by trial and error (Operant conditioning). Freud on the other hand is a psychodynamic psychologist so believes that our behaviour is the result of unconscious forces that we are not aware of.
Oedipus Complex

- Boy’s sexual impulse directed at mother
- Father viewed as rival
- Boy fears father will retaliate (castration anxiety)
- Resolved by the defense mechanism identification with the aggressor (father)
Tapping Into the Unconscious

- Projective tests - vague stimulus to look into the unconscious
- TAT - Thematic Apperception Test
- Rorschach Inkblot
- Word Association: I’ll say a word and you and you say the first word that pops into your head
- Analyzing Dreams and fantasies
AIM

• The aim of the study was to report the findings of the treatment of a five-year-old boy for his phobia of horses.
• Little Hans in two minutes
Procedure/Method

• Freud used a case study
• However the case study was actually carried out by the boy’s father
• Freud only met Hans once
• They wrote correspondence to each other and Freud would give directions on how to deal with the situation based on his interpretations
• First reports- Hans was 3 years old
Findings/Results

• Hans developed an active interest in his ‘widdler’ (penis), and also those of other people. Ex: on one occasion he asked ‘Mummy, have you got a widdler too?’

• Throughout this time, the main theme of his fantasies and dreams was widdlers and widdling.

• 3.5 yr. old- Mom said “Do not touch your widdler or else I will call the doctor to come cut it off.”
Findings/Results

- Hans mother gave birth to daughter, Hanna
- Around 5, Hans father wrote to Freud about his concerns with Hans
- Main problem: ‘He is afraid a horse will bite him in the street, and this fear seems somehow connected with his having been frightened by a large penis’
Findings/Results

• The father went on to provide Freud with extensive details of conversations with Hans. Together, Freud and the father tried to understand what the boy was experiencing and undertook to resolve his phobia of horses.
Findings/Results

- Freud noted that Hans’ fear of horses had developed just after he had experienced some anxiety dreams about losing his mother, and around the time he had been warned about playing with his widdler.
- Freud argued that Hans, who enjoyed getting into bed with his mother, had a repressed longing for her, and had focused his libido (sexual energy) on her.
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- Freud Workbook Page 10
- Complete the following evaluation of the Case of Little Hans.
Findings/Results

- 1 month later, the correspondence revealed that the phobia was much worse. Hans’ father made a connection between the phobia and Hans’ interest with his widdler, so he said to him ‘If you don’t put your hand to your widdler any more, this nonsense of yours will soon get better’.
Findings/Results

• Hans’ anxieties and phobia continued and he was afraid to go out of the house because of his phobia of horses.

• Hans told his father of a dream/fantasy which his father summarized as follows:
  – ‘In the night there was a big giraffe in the room and a crumpled one: and the big one called out because I took the crumpled one away from it. Then it stopped calling out: and I sat down on top of the crumpled one’.
Findings/Results

- Freud and the father interpreted the dream/fantasy as being a reworking of the morning exchanges in the parental bed. Hans enjoyed getting into his parents bed in a morning but his father often objected (the big giraffe calling out because he had taken the crumpled giraffe - mother - away). Both Freud and the father believed that the long neck of the giraffe was a symbol for the large adult penis. However Hans rejected this idea.
Findings/Results

• When Hans was taken to see Freud, he was asked about the horses he had a phobia of. Hans noted that he didn’t like horses with black bits around the mouth. Freud believed that the horse was a symbol for his father, and the black bits were a moustache. After the interview, the father recorded an exchange with Hans where the boy said ‘Daddy don’t trot away from me!’
Findings/Results

• Hans became particularly frightened about horses falling over. He described to his father an incident where he witnessed this happening (confirmed by mother). Throughout this analysis the parents continued to record examples of conversations and the father asked many **leading** questions to help the boy discover the root of his fear.
  – Father: When the horse fell down did you think of your daddy?
Findings/Results

- Hans also developed an interest in toilet functions, especially ‘lumf’ (German word = feces). Hans had many long discussions with his father including conversations about lumf, the birth of his sister, the color of his mother’s underwear and his liking for going into the toilet with his mother or the maid.
Reflective

• Choose a historical figure, television, movie, book, or comic book character to which you can apply one of Freud's psychosexual stages of development. Explain what stage the character is in and what Freud would tell us about this character.
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- **A sketch on Freud**
- *Defense mechanisms*
- In your group develop a 2-3 minute sketch that incorporates one defense mechanisms.
  - Denial: You completely reject the thought or feeling
  - Suppression: You are vaguely aware of the thought or feeling, but try to hide it.
  - Reaction formation: You turn the feeling into its opposite
  - Projection: You think someone else has your thought or feeling
  - Displacement: you redirect your feelings to another target
  - Rationalisation: You try to justify the situation through explanation – denying your true feelings
  - Regression: You revert to an old, usually immature, behaviour
  - Sublimation: You redirect the feeling into a socially productive activity eg: art, poetry.
Findings/Results

• Like many children, Hans had an imaginary friend who he called Lodi after ‘saffalodi’, which is a German sausage. Hans’ father pointed out to Hans that saffalodi looked a bit like lumf, and his son agreed.

• Hans’ fear of the horses started to decline and Freud believed that two final fantasies marked a change in Hans and lead to a resolution of his conflicts and anxieties.
Findings/Results

• Firstly, Hans had described a fantasy where he was married to his mother and was playing with his own children. In this fantasy he had promoted his father to the role of grandfather.

• In the second fantasy, he described how a plumber came and first removed his bottom and widdler and then gave him another one of each, but larger.
Findings/Results

• At age 19 the not so Little Hans appeared at Freud’s consulting room having read his case history. Hans confirmed that he had suffered no troubles during adolescence and that he was fit and well. He could not remember the discussions with his father, and described how when he read his case history it ‘came to him as something unknown’
EXPLANATION

• Freud believed that the findings from the case study of Little Hans supported his theories of child development.

• In particular, the case study provided support for his theory of Oedipus Complex in which the young boy develops an intense sexual love for his mother and because of this, he sees his father as a rival and wants to get rid of him. Freud believed that much of Hans’ problem came from the conflict caused by this wish. The final fantasy of being married to his mother supported this idea.
According to Freud the cause of Little Hans’ phobia was related to his Oedipus complex. Little Hans’, it was argued, was afraid of horses because the horse was a symbol for his father. For example the black bits around the horses face reminded the boy of his fathers moustache, the blinkers reminded him of his fathers glasses and so on. Freud believed that as Little Hans was having sexual fantasies about his mother he feared his father’s retaliation. Little Hans therefore displaced his fear of his father onto horses who reminded him of his father.
Freud argued that Hans was not in any way an abnormal child. He pointed out that unlike most other children of the time, Hans was able to communicate fears and wishes that many children do not have the opportunity to express. He argued that as a result Hans had been able to resolve conflicts and anxieties that would remain unresolved in other children. Freud also notes that there is no sharp distinction between neurotic and the normal, and that many people constantly pass between normal and neurotic states.
STRENGTHS

• Case studies, such as this one carried out by Freud, are particularly useful in revealing and treating the origins of abnormal behavior. In fact some forms of psychotherapy rely on building up a long and detailed case history as an aid to understanding and then helping the client.
STRENGTHS

• The case study provided a very in-depth picture producing lots of qualitative data. In fact Freud argued that it was the special relationship between Hans and his father that allowed the analysis to progress and for the discussions with the boy to be so detailed and so intimate.
WEAKNESSES

• This case study only relates to one individual and we therefore have to be careful generalizing from the findings. We have no way of assessing how typical Little Hans is. Therefore we have to ask whether this study is unique to the relationship between Little Hans, his Father and Freud or whether we can generalize it to other cases.
This case study is really Freud's interpretations of Hans' father's interpretation of his son's own phobia. Freud only saw Little Hans on one or two occasions. It can be argued that this leads to a drastic reduction in objectivity, particularly as the father (Max Graf) was a supporter of Freud’s ideas.
A major problem with Freud's arguments is that other explanations can be found for Little Hans' phobias.

For example, Bowlby, who was also a psychoanalyst, argued that Hans' phobia could be explained in terms of attachment theory. Bowlby believed that most of Hans' anxiety arose from threats by the mother to desert the family. In fact Hans' parents did eventually split up.
EVALUATION OF EXPLANATION

• A further, and simpler, explanation for Hans' phobia is that he was classically conditioned to fear horses. Or in other words, Hans witnessed a horse fall and collapse in the street. Hans then generalized this fear to all horses.
A major problem with Freud's explanations are that they are androcentric and ethnocentric. This study describes the Oedipus complex which is of course unique to boys. Girls, Freud argued, develop penis envy, which later becomes converted into a desire to bear children as the young child begins to recognize that it is impossible for her to develop a penis of her own. I am sure you can make up your own mind if this is sexist or not.
The idea of the Oedipus complex is ethnocentric because Freud assumed that all boys must experience this stage. However, Freud was writing about a particular group of people at a particular period of time. Many cultures including our own do not have families consisting of a Mother and Father living together in one home. Freud, for example, argued that through the Oedipus complex boys identify with their fathers and this established their sexual identification and if this process could not take place, Freud considered that the young child would be likely to grow up homosexual. Evidence does not support this argument.
Finally, and importantly, Freud originally wanted to explain why so many of his female adult patients seemed to have deeply traumatic memories of sexual encounters with their fathers. Initially, he thought that it must be real incest, but he was eventually persuaded that this was not so and developed his ideas about the Oedipus and Electra complex (the female version of the Oedipus complex). It would seem that Freud was originally on the right track after all.
Reflective

• AICE Roulette!