

The theory I will be choosing comes from many psychological theories in criminology, the focus will be the Psychodynamic Theory. This theory's origins can be traced back to Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), who believed our personalities were controlled by three aspects. Starting off with the id which is said to be responsible for the impulsive parts of our decisions, this includes wants, needs, and desires. Next comes our superego which is grounded with morals, it is always striving to do the good thing no matter what. Lastly comes our ego, which is the mediator between the id and superego, always striving to maintain balance of both. The theory centers itself on the idea that something occurred in childhood (trauma, suppressed emotions, etc.) that then results in engagement of criminal behavior.

Diving further into the idea that childhood experiences are essential, in Freud's work he goes into the concept of the psychosexual stages. The psychosexual stages are oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital. The oral stage occurs in the infancy, "infant meets needs primarily through oral gratification. A baby wishes to suck or chew on any object that comes close to the mouth. Babies explore the world through the mouth and find comfort and stimulation as well.

Psychologically, the infant is all id." If the caregiver doesn't meet the needs of the infant according to Freud, "As an adult, the person might not feel good unless involved in some oral activity such as eating, drinking, smoking, nail-biting, or compulsive talking." Afterwards comes the anal stage, in this stage the infant is now a child/toddler and is grasping the concept of containing urges and actions. "There are rules about certain functions and when and where they are to be carried out. The child is learning a sense of self-control. The ego is being developed."

Next comes the phallic stage which occurs when the toddler is now a child (3-5 years old)

and here the superego is developed. "Learns to become more like his father, imitating his actions and mannerisms, thereby learning the role of males in his society. From this experience, the boy learns a sense of masculinity. He also learns what society thinks he should do and experiences guilt if he does not comply. In this way, the superego develops. If he does not resolve this successfully, he may become a "phallic male" or a man who constantly tries to prove his masculinity (about which he is insecure), by seducing women and beating up men." In the case for girls Freud says "But she must resign herself to the fact that she is female and will just have to teach her inferior role in society as a female. However, if she does not resolve this conflict successfully, she may have a weak sense of femininity... The superego's formation takes place during the dissolution of the Oedipus and Electra complex." Latency is next which is in charge on building relationships, "If the child is able to make friends, they will gain a sense of confidence. If not, the child may continue to be a loner or shy away from others, even as an adult." Last comes the genital stage which would occur in adolescent years, "The adolescent experiences rising hormone levels and the sex drive and hunger drives become very strong. An adolescent might learn to redirect their sexual urges into a safer activity such as running, for example. Quieting the id with the superego can lead to feeling overly self-conscious and guilty about these urges. Hopefully, it is the ego that is strengthened during this stage and the adolescent uses reason to manage urges." Although some points of this theory are controversial it is essential to understand the background of psychodynamic theory and these concepts stem from it.

We can see that during childhood the id, ego, and superego is developed and in psychodynamic theory it is explained that "criminal behavior in terms of a dominant Id cause frustration, provocation and childhood experiences such as being neglected, unhappy and miserable, lack of love and nurturing and a very weak super ego and a weak, which is linked to immaturity, and

dependency on others.” This provides more insight to the idea that if something wrong occurs in early childhood stages such as for example the genital stage which oversees sexual urges, “the development of aggressive and sexual drives is linked to childhood experiences, particularly the relationship with one's parents. These early experiences shape an individual's personality and can have a significant impact on their aggressive and sexual behavior later in life.”

Following this comes the idea that the unconscious mind also has a role in the psychodynamic theory, things like anxiety, stress of frustration are said to be a response from the ego who is unable to be a good mediator. “Freud believed that the ego seeks to restore balance through various protective measures known as defense mechanisms. When certain events, feelings, or yearnings cause anxiety, the individual wishes to reduce that anxiety. To do that, the individual’s unconscious mind uses ego defense mechanisms, unconscious protective behaviors that aim to reduce anxiety.” These defense mechanisms include denial, displacement, projection, rationalization, reaction formation, regression, repression, sublimation. If these are abused, Freud believes it can cause a distortion of reality, leading to behavior issues.

References:

Adv, H. (2023, September 26). *Psychodynamic Theory of Criminal Behavior*.
<https://thelegalquotient.com/criminal-laws/criminology/psychodynamic-theory-of-criminal-behaviour/2695/>

Main, P. (2023, November 21). *Psychodynamic Theory*

<https://www.structural-learning.com/post/psychodynamic-theory>

Lumen Learning. (n.d.). Psychodynamic Theory / *Lifespan Development*.

<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-lifespandevelopment/chapter/freuds-psychodynamic-theory/#return-footnote-145-1>