

Little Hans

Description

A lot of Sigmund Freud's work was done with adults, at one stage he did have the opportunity to work with one child known as little Hans. Freud didn't actually work directly with the child but did correspond with his father who was familiar with Freud's theories and wrote to Freud when Hans's behavior appeared to the father as a case Freud may have been interested in.

Little Hans was a 5 year old boy who had been suffering from anxiety which then led to a number of phobias. At a young age Hans began to show a great interest in his 'widdler' and of other peoples genital organs. Hans had a tendency to masturbate and would often receive threats from his mother that she was going to cut off his penis if he didn't stop playing with it. His fascination of his penis shows that he was going through his phallic stage in the psychosexual development.

When he was three and a half his mother gave birth to a baby girl, granting Hans with a sister Hans resented his sister, he held a death wish upon her and as a result he gained a fear of the bath. Hans didn't understand why his sister didn't have a penis, he assumed it was going to grow over time. The death wish the child held was because of jealousy over his mother's attention towards his younger sister. The jealousy he held also related to his fear of baths. Hans would ask his mother why she wouldn't power his penis Freud interpreted this as a seduction attempt. All this was later concluded as the Oedipus complex which occurs in boys. All boys take their mothers as their first love object. And become jealous over their fathers and want their father out of the way so they can have their mother all to them selves. However as their father is bigger and stronger than the child they become afraid that their father will punish them through castration.

Later on Hans developed a new fear of being bitten by horses Freud linked this to two incidents- over hearing a father say to a child 'don't put your finger in the white horse mouth or it will bite you' and seeing a horse pulling a carriage fall down and kick about with its legs. Freud came up with the conclusion that Hans was scared of horses because he feared being castrated by his father as Freud said that his father was symbolically the horse that Hans feared and he feared being bitten by the horse but really feared castration.

Before Hans began to develop all these phobias he did show anxiety that his mother would go away. He followed his mother every where and wanted to always be with her and sleep with her. Hans began to get frequent fantasies, like fantasy of the two giraffes. Hans also fantasized about a plumber who provided him with a larger widdler. This showed that he wanted to grow up and have his mother to him self, the larger penis resembles having a large one like is dad showing that he wants his dad to become a grandfather instead of having to get rid of him. This fantasy shows that Hans was able to get over the Oedipus complex.

Evaluation

As I mentioned, in this case study Freud was never able to be in contact with little Hans and Hans's father actually gave Freud all the information this method of experiment has

its advantages and disadvantages as Hans's father would have lacked objective data as he might not have reported to Freud all the details he would have needed to make a full analysis on the child's behavior. It's hard to know if the father can pick up on all the things Hans is revealing and also one doesn't know if Hans is ever showing all his thoughts and feelings. The advantages on little Hans's father analyzing Hans is that he will know Hans better than Freud would have. Also Hans would be more relaxed as he is in his natural environment around his father.

Freud's overall theories towards little Hans is just one man's view, there will be many other explanations regarding his behavior by different doctors.