

### **An Analysis of Freudian Sexuality Theories**

Freud believes studying sex is insightful to the human psyche because it informs so much of what humans do. Freud specifically explains the importance of studying aberrant behavior “lies in the fact that they unexpectedly facilitate the understanding of the normal formation” (Freud 680). Freud believes that through analyzing aberrant behavior, we can come to a better understanding of normal behavior and human psychology. Freud begins his argument by explaining that the boundaries between normal and aberrant sexuality are more nuanced than commonly perceived, as he argues that in “no normal person does the normal sexual aim lack some addenda which could be designated as perverse” (Freud 693). By perverse Freud is referring to behavior that deviates from the norm. By explaining how the aberrant is part of the normal, Freud dismantles the rigid boundaries between different forms of sexual expression, showing that the normal and aberrant sexuality have the same origin. Freud builds his argument further by challenging the judgements of aberrant behavior, as he describes that people “gladly attribute this and other excessive aberrations of the sexual instinct to the insane, but this would not accord with the facts” (Freud 684). Freud dismantles this judgement of the aberrant with an example of oral behavior; he explains how oral behavior is considered perverse when directed at the genitals but not when directed at another mouth (Freud 686). This example underscores the relative nature of these distinctions, as the same act can shift from normal to perverse based on context. By challenging the convention of attributing the aberrant to the insane, and instead displaying the relativity of sexuality, Freud sets up a clinical analysis of sexuality separate from cultural judgements.

The separation from conventions allows Freud to analyze key differentiators between the aberrant and the normal: restraint, exclusiveness, and flexibility. Freud explains that what

distinguishes sexual experiences is not the act itself, but the psychological restraint and personal loathing that individuals internalize. As he notes, an individual yields "to a distinct feeling of loathing which restrains him from adopting such sexual aims" (Freud 687). The clinical view Freud establishes allows for the observation that it is restraint the individual performs, out of loathing in this case, that stands as key differentiator in those who have aberrant aims and those who don't as opposed to an inherent difference. Building on this nuanced understanding of psychological restraint, Freud further delineates the boundaries of normality by identifying specific conditions under which sexual variations become pathological. Although Freud dismantles moral judgments of perversion, he also identifies specific instances where perversions are deemed "morbid." If the perverse "does not appear beside the normal (sexual aim and sexual object)" (Freud 694) it has ceased to be an occasional variation. The lack of normal aims and objects and focus on the perverse is what Freud calls exclusiveness. Furthermore, if the perversions have "under all circumstances repressed and supplanted the normal" (Freud 694) the normal then it has completely overtaken normal urges. This overtaking of the normal and focus on the perverse in all circumstances is what Freud calls fixation. Freud asserts that the "exclusiveness and fixation of the perversion justifies us in considering it a morbid symptom" (Freud 694). In this context, Freud establishes the importance of fixation in the definition of normal sexual behavior. By establishing that normal and perverse behaviors share similar origins and removing moral judgment, Freud allows the definition of normality to rely on how individuals manage their sexuality rather than on inherent differences. This framework reframes normal sexual behavior as a dynamic process shaped by psychological structures and external conditions, rather than a fixed or innate state. Thus, aberrant sexuality becomes a lens through which the complexities and boundaries of normality are clarified.

The importance of studying childhood sexuality lies in redefining it through a developmental lens. Freud argues that examining childhood sexuality can “reveal to us the essential features of the sexual instinct and would show us its development” (Freud 711). He challenges the misconception that children are not sexual beings, attributing it to “infantile amnesia,” which “veils from most people... the first years of their childhood” and leads to neglect of early sexual experiences (Freud 712-713). By dismantling the notion of childhood asexuality, Freud highlights how early experiences profoundly shape adult sexuality. Freud explores how exposure to perversions during childhood can influence future behavior. He likens this to a woman who, though sexually normal, may adopt and retain perversions under the guidance of a seducer (Freud 724). Children, lacking “psychic dams” such as shame or morality, are particularly vulnerable to internalizing these deviations (Freud 724). This susceptibility makes childhood sexuality a foundational element in shaping adult sexual behavior. Freud also establishes a developmental framework for normal sexuality, defining its goal as the “function of propagation” (Freud 729). He explains that during two key periods of object selection—ages 3–5 and puberty—children must renounce earlier objects for new ones. Failure to align these stages can result in fixation, which Freud identifies as a source of aberrant sexuality (Freud 731). For example, Freud notes that the disparity between these stages often prevents the “union of all desires in one object” (Freud 731), disrupting normal sexual development. Freud’s study of childhood sexuality redefines normal adult behavior by showing that aberrations stem from developmental conflicts rather than inherent differences or insanity. This developmental framework offers an objective definition of normality, emphasizing the influence of early experiences while minimizing moral judgment.