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# CHILDHOOD SEXUALITY, PSYCHOANALYSIS AND SEXUAL EDUCATION EMANCIPATION AT SCHOOL

## *CHILD SEXUALITY, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND EMANCIPATORY SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOL*

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**Summary**
This is a qualitative and bibliographic study, which aims to present the theme of childhood sexuality, investigate and unravel the concept of sexuality for psychoanalysis. To this end, the objective is to begin with studies on hysteria in Sigmund Freud and advance in the work of the Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, with regard to the contributions of the concept of infantile sexuality to current times. Furthermore, a necessary discussion is included about the possible articulations with the field of Sexual Education, from a brief historical path, to the current crossings around the emancipatory conception of education and political and social setbacks. Freudian sexuality expands biologizing readings and includes the affective-drive dimension of the body, which can be linked to the educational field. The challenges of school in postmodernity are complex and call for questioning the emancipatory conception of education. In this sense, it is necessary to think about how psychoanalysis and education can act together in the face of the neoliberal machinery. To this end, constant psychoanalytic updating with a view to emancipation can contribute to a path against the grain of culture, just as Freud did in his time. As a proposal, an education that can open space for listening, desire and differences between subjects.
**Key words:**Emancipatory education. Sex education. Psychoanalysis. Child sexuality.

**Abstract**
This is a qualitative and bibliographic study, which intends to present the theme of infant sexuality, investigate and unravel the concept of sexuality for psychoanalysis. Therefore, the objective is to start with the studies in hysteria by Sigmund Freud and proceed in the work of the Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, with regard to the contributions of the concept of infant sexuality in the current times. Furthermore, a necessary discussion is included on the possible articulations with the field of Sexual Education, from a brief historical tour, to the current crossings around the emancipatory conception of education and the political and social setbacks. Freudian sexuality expands the biological readings and includes the affective-drive dimension of the body, which they can articulate with the educational field. The schools challenge

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in postmodernity are complex and call for questioning the emancipatory conception of education. In this sense, it is necessary to think about how psychoanalysis and education can act together against the neoliberal machinery. Therefore, a constant psychoanalytic update with a view to emancipation can contribute to a path against culture, as Freud did in his time. As a proposal, an education that can open space for listening, desire and differences between subjects.
**Keywords**: Emancipatory education. Sex education. Psychoanalysis. Infant sexuality.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Before venturing into the theory of sexuality in psychoanalysis, one can ask what, after all, is human sexuality? How does it develop? Will it be possible to investigate the birth and evolution of sexuality in humanity? Since sexuality is associated with humans, it is worth highlighting the differences between the human species and primates, which, a few million years ago, evolved and developed as humans.

According to André (2016), the originality of human sexuality occurs in the disjunction between sexuality and reproduction, since, unlike animals, humans are not exclusively subject to the instinctual regime. Along with the evolution and differentiation of the human, in relation to the animal world, language and symbolic activity were inaugurated. Language, typical of humans, does not seem to have a beginning, middle and end, and to be ordered in a logical, predictable or immutable way; on the contrary, it unfolds fluidly in a given culture, at a given time and in given subjectivities.

Sexuality, in Freud (1905), is a fundamental concept of psychoanalysis, which concerns the entire instinctual life and affective nature of the human being. From the way the subject is constituted, childhood sexuality, instinctual circuits and their destinies, to the way they live, love or not love. Therefore, all the drive complexity says about human sexuality.

Figueiró (2006), faced with the question of what sexuality is, corroborates the mention cited above, when stating what:

> Sexuality is an essentially human ontological dimension, whose meanings and experiences are determined by nature, by the subjectivity of each human being and, above all, by culture, in a historical and dialectical process. (p. 42).

Taking these concepts into account, we seek to understand the transformations, ruptures, advances and setbacks that can be found in the field of Sexual Education, in Brazil and in our time.

## 2 THEORETICAL COURSE OF SEXUALITY IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

At the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, psychoanalysis revolutionized the concepts of sexuality, the unconscious and introduced the notion of drive to differentiate it from the field of instinct and the biological; in other words, it inaugurates the place of desire and the psychic. In this sense, “the first revolution of sexuality is prehistoric, the second is Freudian. The first dissociates sex and instinct, the second relativizes the genital and makes infantile sexuality the center of human sexuality.” (ANDRÉ, 2016, p. 117). Here, language also fits in as a living expression of the drive, whether expressed in narratives or fantasized in the consciousness and/or in the latent and manifest contents of the unconscious subject. The language articulated with the drive emphasizes the plural and open dimension of sexuality. In this direction, this text briefly proposes to investigate child sexuality in psychoanalysis.

### 2.1 Considerations on hysteria studies

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In the work “Studies on hysteria” (FREUD, 1895-2016), Sigmund Freud and the doctor Joseph Breuer, study cases of hysteria from the end of the 19th century, and describe the psychic mechanisms of this phenomenon. Some psychoanalytic elements originated at this time, with listening to hysterical patients and changing the investigation method. Inspired by Charcot, Freud used hypnosis to remove hysterical symptoms; later he abandoned it, as he observed the limitations of this technique, namely that not all patients were hypnotizable and that, frequently, patients

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symptoms returned. Freud develops, based on the case of Emmy von N.[3], the free association method and inaugurates a way of listening to patients' complaints; beyond the organic, medical insistence and suggestion, it undertakes the valorization of words and the psychic field.

According to Melo and Almeida (2020), this work by Freud contributed to the depathologization of hysteria. From Freud, it was possible to understand hysteria as a path of psychic organization in the face of desire and lack, inherent to the subject, not merely as a disease.

Freud [1895] (2016), was concerned with investigating the causal relationships of the persistent symptoms of his neurotic patients, questions that found no explanation, in his time, in the medical field. Symptoms such as paralysis, contractures, continuous vomiting, anorexia, tics, body aches, etc., without organic causes, are heard by Freud, and find connections with childhood experiences and fantasies. In some cases, the incident that generated the hysterical phenomenon is evident, as in the following example:

> A seriously ill child finally falls asleep; the mother focuses all her willpower on keeping still and not waking her up. Due precisely to this intention, she produces ("against hysterical will"!) a clicking noise with her tongue. This is repeated later, on an occasion when she also wants to remain absolutely quiet, and this gives rise to a tic, which, in the form of clicking her tongue, accompanies her for many years, whenever she becomes agitated. (FREUD, 1895] 2016, p. 21).

In other cases, the connection between the symptom and the precipitating reason is evident, as in the example above; although, in other cases, the connection is not simple. The symptom keeps a history, a journey, from which one can find countless repressed affects, considered as psychic trauma. These affects can be of fear, shame, anguish, psychic pain and depend on the sensitivity of the affected person. (FREUD, [1895] 2016).

As the author observes, the hysteric suffers above all from reminiscences" (FREUD, [1895] 2016, p. 25); that is, the past appears present, active and active; memories of traumatic experiences. What appeared in the body was revealed as unspoken, gagged words, affections that did not have access through symbolic means. Such physical sufferings, as they were not heard and understood, acted on the body, like messengers. Freud thus inaugurates the place of hysteria as a way of suffering, and validates the experience of psychic suffering, whose previous place was verified in the medical field or in the moral field.

Melo and Almeida (2020), point out that the case of Anna O. was essential for the discovery of childhood sexuality and the unconscious. The expression "talking cure" was used by this patient when reporting the relief she felt during the consultations. What was repressed by the unconscious, due to the moral conditions of a culture, is associated with sexuality, and begins to manifest itself, with deformations, in dreams, in forgetfulness, mistakes and jokes, or in the formation of symptoms. The unconscious thus has a different logic than the conscious, it has a dynamic, timeless character and is absent of contradictions.

This work makes it possible to reflect on the distinction between a purely biological body and a instinctual body, marked by stories, desires, conflicts, language, in short, drives that manifest human sexuality. According to Assoun (1995), the drive (Trieb) is an essential concept for understanding sexuality; it expresses the power of excitement and the whole body participates as a source of this excitement. For the field of sexual education, there is the contribution that sexuality is not defined by genitality.

### 2.2 Considerations on the Freudian theory of sexuality



In "Three essays on the theory of sexuality" (FREUD, [1905] 2016), Freud describes popular opinion on the subject of sexuality and distances himself from it, by undertaking the psychoanalytic study of cases and his scientific observations. Furthermore, he introduces and names the term "libido", to refer to a need for sexual satisfaction.

3 Case described in the work "Studies on hysteria" (FREUD, [1895] 2016); Freud used several techniques in this case: all cathartic, hypnotic suggestion, "pressure technique". She insisted that the patient remember the trauma, but Emmy asked him to let her speak, without unnecessary interruptions.

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At the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, Viennese society had the notion that sexuality it began with puberty, and manifested itself through sexual attraction between a man and a woman; its goal, purpose or objective would therefore be sexual union and the set of actions that led to this end. However, Freud ([1905] 2016) observes that reality appears to be different. Both people (sexual object) and their actions (sexual goal), in their sexual advances, express themselves in variable ways.

In the second essay, Freud ([1905] 2016) specifically deals with the theme of infantile sexuality, which we especially in this text. The emotional life of children was not an issue investigated. Furthermore, Freud draws attention to the phenomenon of childhood amnesia, which means that most adults do not remember the first years of childhood. Regarding the beginning of life, Freud highlights:

> [...] we reacted vividly to impressions, they knew how to express pain and joy in a very human way, we demonstrated love, jealousy and other passions that then agitated us strongly, and we even said things that adults recorded as proof of intelligence and incipient ability to judge. Why does our memory lag so far behind our other psychic activities? [...] the same impressions that we forgot, however, left the deepest traces in our psychic life, and became decisive for all our subsequent development. (FREUD, [1905], 2016, p. 76).

For Freud ([1905] 2016), there is a connection between infantile amnesia and hysterical amnesia; such a connection may be associated with the beginnings of childhood sexual life, which are removed from consciousness in adult life. From birth there is sexual manifestation. Freud uses as a theoretical and empirical model the act of sucking a baby, whose behavior begins with the purpose of preserving life and the need for food, but which then progresses to the purpose of seeking sexual satisfaction. The author warns of the confusion that some pediatricians at the time could have assumed with the term “sexual”, as if it were “genital”, but that this is not the case.

The sexual comes from the sensation of pleasure, which is produced throughout the body; It differs from adult erotic behavior, as it is in constitution and in a condition of sexual immaturity. Freud ([1905] 2016) describes the main erogenous zones of psychosexual development (oral, anal, phallic), and how the child relies on them to obtain pleasure; for example, when a baby breastfeeds, what he receives is not only food, but also affection and support; when they obstinately retain feces, it may be related to affirming their desire and not that of the caregiver; however, the entire extent of the skin and senses are susceptible to dealing with varied excitations and stimuli.

The Freudian conception of sexuality presupposes a “polymorphically perverse predisposition” (FREUD, [1905] 2016, p. 98); that is, sexuality uses a plurality of possible objects to deal with the pleasure-displeasure of experiences. The body is instinctual and the characteristics of children's sexual life are essentially auto-erotic; support a vital function of the body; and the sexual goal is the satisfaction of an erogenous zone. This satisfaction “[...] must have been experienced previously, thus leaving the need to be repeated” (FREUD, [1905] 2016, p. 89), and this need is attributed both to the elimination or escape of a displeasure, regarding the production and search for pleasure.

Sexual exercise in a child's life subjectively marks a drive circuit in their body and history. complex; Traces experienced in childhood, such as the smell of coffee made by a grandmother loved by the child, can resonate in adulthood, as a memory of affection. Still on the dimension of sexuality in the constitution of the psyche, the authors add:

> The fact that the human baby is born without the basic conditions to survive on its own means that it needs someone to welcome and care for it. This prematurity, which is strictly biological, requires care work carried out, generally, by the mother, who welcomes the baby by offering him the vital instruments he lacks. The mother acts to encourage the baby's dependence on her. In the three essays, Freud called this initial investment from the mother to the baby seduction. Therefore, this connection has a sexual content and is intertwined in the constitution of the self, since this self will be constituted with the presence of this other. (Lazzarini; Viana, 2006).



Affective processes can be observed in school-age children and are associated with sexuality, as Freud explains:

> [...] the fear of taking a test, the tension due to a difficult task can be significant in the emergence of sexual manifestations and in the attitude towards school, as in these circumstances a feeling of stimulation often arises that leads to touching the genitals [...]. The sexually exciting effect

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> of various affects that are not pleasurable in themselves, such as feeling anguished, terrified, trembling, persists in a large number of individuals even into adulthood, and probably explains the fact that so many people seek opportunities for sensations of this type, as long as they are determined circumstances (belonging to an imaginary world, books, theater) dampen the severity of the feeling of displeasure.

In short, after a brief explanation of the path of Freudian sexuality, it is observed that the concept goes beyond the biological dimension; understands the psychic dimension and the way in which the subject relates to himself, to others and to the world. Chauí (1991), breaks with the biological, by stating that sexuality has an affective dimension, and agrees with the Freudian theory about the polymorphic characteristic of sexuality and the symbolization of desire.

## 3 POSSIBLE ARTICULATIONS IN THE FIELD OF SEXUAL EDUCATION

The National Curricular Parameters – PCNs (BRASIL, 1997), established by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), developed the proposal to include Sexual Education in the school curriculum, as a transversal theme, to start in Elementary School. This inclusion was based on ideas such as combating sexually transmitted diseases and reducing early pregnancy. However, sexual education in schools encountered serious resistance to the debate, whether because opposing advocates claim that it is the exclusive responsibility of families or as a result of censorship under the military regime (ROSENBERG, 1985), among other aspects that lead to repression and control over the theme.

Regarding the history of sexual education in Brazil, mention is made of the legitimization of the entry of this topic into the educational system and the guarantee of rights, based on a set of social changes, with the landmark of the 1988 Federal Constitution, the promulgation of the Statute of Child and Adolescent (ECA) in 1990, the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law of 1996, the School Health Program (PSE), the National Curricular Reference for Early Childhood Education (RCNEI), and the PCNs, cited previously (UNESCO, 2013), among others. It is recognized, despite restrictions, throughout history, that sexuality is not dissociated from the individual; that is, it accompanies the person and is everywhere, as well as at school.

Since then, it can be observed that some actions have been carried out in dealing with sexual education in the school field; however, there are persistent difficulties with the topic. Such as, for example, the centralization of teacher training on the biological bias of sexuality. Or even, the difficulty of teachers in developing dialogues about sexuality, as well as affectivity in contact with themselves and with students (FIGUEIRÓ, 2009).

Figueiró (2006) and Gagliotto (2014) defend an emancipatory sexual education, which comprises sexuality integrated into life, with all its dimensions, manifestations and biological, psychological, affective, social, political, cultural interactions, etc. The proposal for emancipatory sexual education seeks to develop the autonomy and critical capacity of subjects regarding knowledge about their own bodies. Furthermore, this conception of education aims at the social transformation of the individual, so that he or she can think and act in a reflective-critical way, free from constraints, taboos, prejudices and discrimination regarding sexuality.

In contemporary times, has school been a place that emancipates? Araújo, Fernandes and Araújo (2021), start from a critical perspective of emancipation and question whether education can still emancipate, given that the movement towards neoliberal education is underway; which is characterized by learning focused on utilitarianism and uncritical pedagogism. Between the movements of emancipation and regression, we must question the possible solutions in towards a liberating education, even if there are complex impasses in the way neoliberal logic operates. Precisely by reporting the signs of setbacks, we can continue to question educational practices in sexuality.



Veiga-Neto (1999), in addition to denouncing the dangers of neoliberal discourse, launches a school perspective, both as a maintainer of control practices, as well as indispensable for the power of a space of resistance. Alert fornecessary attention to new political agencies for the educational area, as it proposes an ethical and critical positioning, in order to provoke an exercise of rapprochement with an emancipatory education.

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## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Current times have posed challenges to society, schools, education, and specifically the field of sexual education. It is important to think about the relationships between school and current society, and what is possible to achieve in the field of sexuality in education. And yet, what can psychoanalysis contribute to social ties and desiring subjects? Would it be possible to bring psychoanalysis closer to an emancipatory conception?

According to Dockhorn and Macedo (2008), the culture of narcissism and the society of the spectacle are hallmarks of our time. Contemporary subjectivities establish ephemeral social ties, accompanied by the acceleration of modes of production and life. In order to seek immediate pleasure and preserve the illusion of permanent happiness, individuals may quickly discard one another at the first sign of threatened suffering. Or, even, in order to accelerate the learning processes to manufacture useful subjects for the neoliberal machinery, they mortify the powers of life. The latter, strictly associated with the concept of sexuality discussed throughout this text.

Psychoanalysis goes against the grain of culture, just as Freud did in his time; This implies constants theoretical and technical renewals, which enable a movement of openness and a posteriori action. In other words, a psychoanalysis that can accompany transformations in culture, as well as, in this case, also in the educational field. Its fundamental concepts, such as “drive”, “unconscious” and “transference”, are still relevant when thinking about advances, setbacks, alienations and resistance in sexuality education.

In short, beyond the biological and hygienist concept of sexuality, psychoanalysis can follow a path of rupture with the culture of narcissism and spectacle. In intersubjectivities, sexuality can be reflected in terms of affective involvement and libidinal investment in the Self and the other, not only in the Self; that is, that singularities are respected. An education, as a proposal, that opens space for listening, with the possibility of recognizing the desire and differences of the subjects. Furthermore, the subject himself can recognize himself as a desiring being and involved in his teaching-learning processes.

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