

Cover Letter- For this capstone draft, I really wanted to talk more about the theories of instincts and decision making. I thought that was the most important aspect to talk about because I am persuading someone of my topic and I need some type of evidence. One thing that was really hard for me is the 1000 word limit. Although, I accomplished it I felt contained by these 1000 words and I wanted to say more. I wanted to express more so I hope the revision process allows me to do that. I definitely picked an advanced topic but I really hope I exemplified it well and that it showed my passion. I do feel like I was just spitting out knowledge and reiterating aspects of Freud's theory so I will have to review that. The original intention was to make a piece that shared a light topic that was carefully crafted, but obviously that had to change during this pandemic. I had to adjust my thinking and put more attention to the sources I was using vs putting my attention to overall research and interviews.

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Trusting You

Life is filled with moments that define the meaning of existence for a person. These moments can range from small events like winning your first soccer game or a big event like graduating from high school. However, there are moments that test a person beyond thought. Moments that make you question who you are and who you will be. The thoughts that go into

making decisions can feel mind bottling, and that is supposed to happen. At some point in your life you have probably told “lead with your gut” or “go with your gut instincts”, but what does that actually mean and more importantly what are the implications of this. Human instincts is where one can internalize and think about the emotional and physical implications of a situation in order to take action therefore make decisions. By making decisions and facing a challenge, may one be able to explore their human psyche and tap into the ability to forge a path based on instincts and reason.

For a long time instincts have been looked at as a bad thing because instincts imply that when a decision is needed, one will make an irrational decision because emotions outweigh the need to make a logical and reasoned action. Therefore, a definition for “instincts” is “An innate propensity in organized beings (esp. in the lower animals), varying with the species, and manifesting itself in acts which appear to be rational, but are performed without conscious design or intentional adaptation of means to ends. Also, the faculty supposed to be involved in this operation (formerly often regarded as a kind of intuitive knowledge) (“Instincts, n3a”). It is interesting that instincts are not just applicable to humans but also animals. This shows the intricate complexity of the mind and the ability to make decisions. When thinking about the word “instinct”, many people may think of synonymous words like belief, action, or consciousness. The real meaning however is so ambiguous as it encapsulates studies of psychology, anthropology, and philosophy.

While instincts may seem that they can only happen in moments of dire attention, instincts actually take place throughout one’s daily life like: what is for dinner pizza or pasta? A decision like dinner choices is fairly easy because that can be answered with what you really

want or desire. The key word here is “desire” which plays a large role in unconscious theory and this includes instinct theory. Sigmund Freud has for a long time been considered the father of psychoanalysis and modern psychology, and Freud’s work was heavily influenced with how instincts play a role in the unconscious. For Freud, he was heavily affected by rejecting the societal norms during his time, and by doing so was able to explore an evolving sense of self. The impact of instinctual connections with desires and culture all adheres to Freud’s argument. For example, sexuality was and still considered a sacred value of religion, so Freud explored sexuality and neglected the previously implemented ideas from Catholicism, Puritan protestantism, and orthodox Judaism. While people in the 21st century think of sexual encounters as predominately irrational decisions filled with ill thinking, the reality is that engaging in sexual relations was once considered rational. In other words, “Many fully socialized people come to a rational decision to oppose some values in their culture (Bocock).” An implication like this then allows individuals to see that even in times of opposition can one make a rational decision, and not just make a decision based off of a whim.

Instincts are usually associate with psychology, but when Freud wrote instinct theory, it was presented in a way that applied more to sociology. Instincts theory holds two main components: ego and sexual then eventually self-preservation. After these two comes an intermediate phase which then sets up future death instincts and sexual instincts. Freud’s analysis took place through the examination of social norms within civilizations and certain groups within civilizations. It is understable to see the stark contrast of sexual relations to death as they seem so different, however, Freud explores these as the two instinctual connections. Later on, Freud realized that ego and sexual instincts were too similar and they could not oppose one another, but

self-preservation and sexual instincts could. Freud's later revised instinct theory was a rational decision because he realized his original linkage of sexual and ego functions the same when applied. His rational thinking was driven because he saw the need to sustain the rationality with his work so there was a level of balance. Because of this theory, Freud argued that this eliminates basic social instincts because sexual instincts cover that.

Instincts manifest in different ways even though Freud argues that it purely sexual and death. Sexual applies to instances of desire and self-preservation especially with people whether that be spouses or friends. Death is the all encompassing despair of a moment bigger than the self. If death and the instincts that lead up to that moment are defined by the individual, then this becomes part of creating a sense of identity. Stephen Greenblatt argued that there are external forces that contribute the formation of identity, and this could oppose Freud's argument. Maybe, there is no rational thinking for the self that is at the same time an instinct of life and death.

Instincts play a role in the way one makes a decision, but it also plays a role in the formation of one's identity. Instincts no matter how much they are about an external force or problem are really a about self-preservation. How to lead with reason and rational thinking that can at the same time guarantee the well-being state of an individual? Honestly, this is not something to easily respond to except that one should trust their own instincts and belief system even if it goes against a social or belief construct. The true value of having an instinct is knowing that it is always subjective to the needs and wants of the individual.