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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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CHARACTERS TRACES THROUGH HISTORY

Fernanda Alves Maia*¹ and Elton Euler da Silva Reis²

¹PhD in Health Sciences, Department of development research, O Corpo Explica (OCE), São José dos Campos, São Paulo, Brazil; ²Creator, Founder and Technical Director, Department of development research, O Corpo Explica (OCE), São José dos Campos, São Paulo, Brazil

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*Corresponding author:

Fernanda Alves Maia

ABSTRACT

The interference of the mind/body dualism in the development of diseases has determined the appearance of several theories that evaluate this relation. Among them, should be noted that character traces are associated with specific body structure, so, similar body shapes present similar behaviors/feelings. The objective of this article was to evaluate the approach to character traces over time and the presence of instruments that measure the percentage of each trace in a person. This is a descriptive research of the literature review type, which selection of articles happened in January and February of 2022 in the Lilacs, Apa Psycnet and Pubmed databases, and the following descriptors were used in English and Portuguese: "Character; traces; analysis; Reich; Freud; Lowen; measure; theory". The chosen papers were published in Portuguese, English, Spanish and filtered according to the complete availability and consistent with the theme. Among the 595 results, 11 were redone and 18 were appropriated to the objective. The term "character traces" does not appear explicitly in most of the selected studies, and only two studies describe the five characters traces: schizoid, oral, psychopathic, masochist and rigid. No study pointed out a tool capable of measuring the percentage of each character trace.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout time, numerous theories came out about the mind-brain relation, as well as about the factors that would define it (Castro *et al.*, 2006; Ramozzi-Chiarottino and Freire, 2013). In ancient Greece, Hippocrates, Plato and Aristotle considered the human being as an indivisible unit. In the Hellenistic period, Democritus saw the body as a "tent" (skēnos), the natural habitation of the soul. In the medieval period, St. Augustine pointed out that man was made up of rational substances, the result of soul and body (Castro *et al.*, 2006). In the modern age René Descartes suggested the total separation of mind and body. Despite suggesting this separation, Descartes pointed out that the human being was formed by an immaterial - thinking component and by a body structure, distinctly separate, but so closely related that they, in some way, understood it like a unified and indivisible whole (Urban, 2018). From the beginning of the 20th century, with the development of psychoanalytic theory, Freud, through the concept of psychic determinism, rescues the importance of the internal aspects of man and suggests that there is a mind inside the body (Castro *et al.*, 2006). Reich suggested that the mind and the body are one, and Lowen says that the individual is a complex relation between body, mind, and spirit (Castro *et al.*, 2006; Oliveira and Lima, 2015). The psychoanalytic theoreticians emphasized the importance of early childhood experiences in the relation between the human mind and body.

As they said, it is these experiences that provides the person to "character traces" throughlife. In what has been called the psychogenetic hypothesis, early events determined deep-rooted defensive systems that can lead the individual to react to new situations as if they were replicas of what happened in the childhood (Millon, 2012). The term character has been used throughout history, starting in Ancient Greece, passing through the appropriation of some later philosophers, until its incorporation by the psychological science. After this incorporation, character started to indicate traces. With more recent appropriations by psychoanalysis in the beginning of the 20th century, references to character have been made by the most important psychoanalysts: Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Abraham Harold Maslow, Sándor Ferenczi, and Wilhelm Reich (Silva, 2001). This work is added for those who want to contribute to a greater clarification about the theoretical foundation of character traces. The intention of this work was not to study the original works of the main theorists, but to verify how the publications on this theme have been through time, as well as to verify the existence of instruments that measure the percentage of each person's traces.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to identify the studies about character traces, a literature review was made step by step. Initially, the development of the research questions: "What is the evidence regarding character traces

over time? Is there in the scientific literature a way to measure these traces?"; next, the search for studies and bibliographic references in the scientific literature, as well as the data collection and evaluation of the included studies, so we could go to the analysis of the evaluated data and the presentation of the review. We had as bibliographic sources the Pubmed database, a digital archive made by the National Library of Medicine of the United States; Lilacs, a database that contains the scientific and technical production in health of the Latin American/Caribbean countries; and APA PycNet, a database developed by the American Psychological Association. These data sources stand out by guaranteeing easy access, making available online scientific production. This guarantees greater communication among the professionals and researchers worldwide, allowing knowledge to be acquired, evaluated, criticized, applied, or revised. For the search in these databases, the following descriptors were used combined with the Boolean operator (AND), in English: "Character; traces; analysis; Reich; Freud; Lowen; measure; theory". In Portuguese, the descriptors used were: "Caráter; Análise do caráter; Reich; Freud; Lowen; teoria; traços; mensurar". This database search was conducted between January and February 2022. The descriptors were associated in different ways and these associations are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Associations between the descriptors used in Pubmed, Apa PycNet and LILACS databases between January and February 2022

Dat Base	Combination of Descriptors	Quality of Results	Selected Articles
PubMed	Character AND Reich	45	5
	Character AND traces AND Reich	2	0
	Character analysis AND Reich	20	1
	Character AND traces AND Lowen	0	0
	Character AND Reich AND measure	9	1
	Character AND theory AND Freud	87	8
	Character AND theory AND Reich	4	1
	Character AND Reich	2	1
	Character AND traces AND Reich	0	0
	Character analysis AND Reich	0	0
APA PycNet	Character AND traces AND Lowen	0	0
	Character AND Reich AND measure	0	0
	Character AND theory AND Freud	21	1
	Character AND theory AND Reich	2	1
	Caráter AND Reich	11	4
LILACS	Traços AND caráter AND Reich	0	0
	Análise do caráter AND Reich	11	5
	Traços AND caráter AND Lowen	0	0
	Caráter AND Reich AND mensurar	0	0
	Caráter AND teoria AND Freud	359	12
	Caráter AND teoria AND Reich	20	5

Source: personal elaboration

Two independent reviewers selected the studies according to pre-established eligibility and inclusion criteria. Initially, to include the primary studies, it was delimited that the scientific articles should deal with character analysis, character traces, and the theories of Freud, Reich, and Lowen that dealt with this theme. Wasn't defined a specific time for the publication, since the theoretical description of the authors is not recent and for better understanding the work done, the original files were consulted. In addition, we evaluated the articles published in Portuguese, English and Spanish, classified as case reports or data obtained in a systematic way, the quality was verifiable, master's theses and doctoral dissertations, as well as descriptive correlational and qualitative research. During the study, the titles and abstracts of the 595 pre-selected studies were initially evaluated to see if the studies were adequate considering the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Out of the 595, 11 were excluded for being duplicates in the databases and 539 due to the title and abstract not being adequate to the guiding question; not being in English, Portuguese or Spanish; being classified as reports, news, editorials and non-scientific texts. Thus, 45 studies were included in this stage. The 45 studies were read in full and 25 were excluded for not answering the research question. Eighteen articles, one master's thesis, and one doctoral dissertation were included in this step. Due to the scarcity of studies published on this theme, we also searched for 6 studies that were referenced in the previously selected articles.

In the writing stage it was decided to exclude 8 studies from the scope in order to meet the submission standards of the selected journal. Thus, 18 studies were part of the final sample of this review. Descriptively, the 30 articles were analyzed, allowing the evaluation of the level and quality of the available evidence. The need for future research on the subject was identified. Finally, this study was in compliance with international and national research ethical precepts.

RESULTS

It was observed a shortage of scientific articles published with the theme proposed in this article: character trace. It was also verified that most of the articles found were in Portuguese (n=17) and published in Brazilian indexed journals (n=15). Most of the articles are not clear about "character traces", they talk more about the definition of "character" through history. More than 90% study the pieces of Freud and Reich, and only two referred to the bioenergetic theory suggested by Lowen. Over the studies, the authors report many times the Impulsive, Neurotic, Genital, Oral Erotic, Anal Erotic (pleasure of retention), Hysterical, Compulsive, Phallic Narcissistic characters. However, it was found that only two studies described the five

characters traces: schizoid, oral, psychopathic, masochist, and rigid. And that no study pointed out a tool capable of measuring the percentage of each of these traces in the person.

DISCUSSION

The discussion in this article started with a brief description of the concept of character, according to the main theorists of this theme. Then, the conceptions of character development, the construction of character analysis, the relation between armor, character traces, and body shape, the bioenergetic analysis and the five characters traces, the instrument to measure character traces, the "Map of Characters", and the "Body Analysis" were discussed. Freud mentions, for the first time, the term character associated with sexual contents, fixations and repression. In "Ego and Id", Freud considers that character is linked to the ego, and even more, it is the character of the ego (Silva and Albertini, 2005). Adler emphasizes the existing relation between character and neurosis and talks about the importance of directing the analysis to the patient's character (Silva, 2001). Abraham also gets character and neurosis close and indicates the importance of character analysis. This author relates the formation of character and the development of infantile eroticism and mentions the relation between character and the individual's physiognomy (Silva, 2001). For

Ferenczi, character is linked to a certain automatism in reactions, and he emphasizes that much of what we call character is not innate and is built in relation to the external world during the latency period or before (Silva, 2001). For Reich, character is a person's specific way of existing, the typical way of reacting; character would be delimited as an individual and distinctive element (Silva, 2001). Freud and Reich established the bases for a typology with a psychoanalytical character (Millon, 2012). At the end of the 19th century, Freud comes up with a new theory, based on the development of psychoanalysis, about how a neurophysiological substrate interfered in psychic processes (Gomes, 2005). Freud also pointed out that, frequently, the interaction of several unconscious (multidetermined) factors are significant in the occurrence of a variety of psychological disorders, since personality is built in stages, which can be affected by traumas and generate specific defense mechanisms (Kupfersmid, 2019). However, it was Reich who was most responsible for defining the conceptions of character development (Millon, 2012). He associated body structure patterns with psychic formation and, from this incorporation, character started to designate traces that relate the way the individual reacts to the environment and social relations (Lima, 2010; Vian, 2016). In his practice, Reich observed limitations with the basic rule of psychoanalysis, the free association. He noticed that some people followed this rule and made precious associations for the analytic process, but a large number did not follow the rule and showed strong resistance. He pointed out that the analytic work became more extensive when the patient's character was fully evaluated and not only in the analysis of the isolated symptom. This changed the analyst's role from a passive to a more active and direct, concerning all the patient's pathological processes (Volpi and Volpi, 2012; Soares, 2017).

Reich's conception of resistance was new and had more original ideas and implications than the overcoming of resistance of the classical psychoanalytic practice (Shapiro, 2002). By realizing how difficult it was to overcome the resistance to treatment of his patients, Reich looks for another solution for clinical practice and began to develop his studies of character analysis (Volpi and Volpi, 2012; Soares, 2017; Câmara, 1997). The character analysis was a systematic work guided to the body, which put in evidence the individual's emotional processes, reaching the unconscious, and going beyond the understanding of spoken language (Volpi and Volpi, 2012). The practice with character analysis led Reich to find out the muscular armor (Volpi and Volpi, 2012; Soares, 2017), armoring (Soares, 2017), or characterological armor (Quadros, 2016). According to Reich, the armor is formed in our body by the experiences we accumulate during life, unconsciously influencing the construction of our personality (Oliveira and Lima, 2015). They are chronic strains to protect the individual from painful and threatening experiences, either from external stimulation or from internal libidinal impulses (Volpi and Volpi, 2012; Soares, 2017; Quadros, 2016; Almeida and Albertini, 2014). This has caused character analysis to stop being a therapy that is only psychological, and to be directly linked to the body, to the neurovegetative system (Volpi and Volpi, 2012). The term muscle armor was used because in the constant protective nature of this mechanism a muscle contraction happens due to the reaction of the neurovegetative system when in pain or fear, contracts. This somatic response comes with the objective of defending the organism from a possible attack. Even though it is a breastplate, it presupposes a certain flexibility. According to Reich, the armor reacts according to the pleasure principle: in pleasure it expands (becoming more permeable), in displeasure it contracts (becoming more rigid) (Soares, 2017). In search to locate the armor in the midst of the structuring of the psychic system, Reich points out that the armor is formed around the ego, more precisely the part of the personality that lies on the border between the biophysiological pulsional life and the external world (Almeida and Albertini, 2014). For Reich, character formation would be an attempt by the ego to cope with the anguish of a chronic change that leads to its "stiffening" (Almeida and Albertini, 2014; Santos and Oliveira, 2017). This stiffening would have the purpose of protecting the ego from internal and external hazard (Almeida and Albertini, 2014; Santos and Oliveira, 2017). In this context, one can observe the interlaced between ego-character-character, in which the

armor is placed as a kind of cloak or covering, located at the boundary between the internal and external worlds, expressed through character traces (Almeida and Albertini, 2014). The expression "armor" was also used by Reich to highlight the existence of self-symptomatic defense mechanisms, which developed from conflicts with the social environment, performing a function of covering up certain psychic contents, i.e., it is characterized by a standardization of repetitive behaviors. This "emotional armor" defines distinct physical structures according to the patterns of each character by presenting muscular somatization, in which different parts of the body stiffen, defining the character's muscular armor (Volpi and Volpi, 2012).

So, Reich calls the formation of character armor, because this formation restricts the mobility of the psychism as a whole (Soares, 2017; Almeida and Albertini, 2014). He observed that as there is a stiffening in the psychism, there is a stiffening in the body (Soares, 2017). The armoring of the ego would result, above all, from the fear of punishment coming from the social order, from the prohibitions, and from the rules that are conveyed to the child through parents or caregivers (Soares, 2017; Santos and Oliveira, 2017), reinforcing that they would be learned in childhood, as a way to ensure emotional survival (Oliveira e Lima, 2015). Reich searches in the libido theory for a reference to his character analysis theory. In libidinal development, he also found the structuring of character. That is, character would have its formation in the different phases of libidinal development, according to the experiences lived (Soares, 2017). The fixations that occurred in these phases (oral, anal, phallic, genital) would generate a specific type of character (Oliveira and Lima, 2015). Besides Reich, another theorist deepened the studies about the interference of the mind-body relation in the development of stress and pain, Alexander Lowen (Oliveira and Lima, 2015). Both Reich and Lowen described the relevance of analyzing the physical structure of the body to diagnose and treat mental and somatic diseases, based on the assumption that people with the same body shape have similar emotional and behavioral predispositions, since character types are related to specific body formations. Lowen drew on Reich's foundations and developed a new approach to body psychotherapy, bioenergetic analysis. He deepened the descriptions and the study about the relation between body shape and the psychological dynamics of behavioral tendencies and classified the character structures as: schizoid, oral, psychopathic, masochist, and rigid (Oliveira and Lima, 2015; Volpi and Volpi, 2012). Also, he argued that each of these character traces would be associated with a specific body biotype (Oliveira and Lima, 2015). This classification was based on bioenergetic analysis, that demonstrated how traumatic experiences during growth interfered with muscle tension patterns, generating psychologically and physically structured behavioral tendencies. That way, the shape of the body makes it possible to identify the individual's character, explaining the way he or she behaves (Oliveira and Lima, 2015; Volpi and Volpi, 2012).

Bioenergetic analysis is based on body awareness with the goal of providing better health and quality of life (Oliveira and Lima, 2015). Reich and Lowen featured the relation between mind and body shape, and the importance of character analysis to access their clients. However, in order to access people's minds through their body shape, it would be important to know the exact percentage of each character trace in a person. However, neither Reich, Lowen, nor any of the therapists who used the knowledge of these theorists had come up with a way to measure the percentage of character traces. With the objective of accessing a person's mind through the shape of their body, three Brazilian researchers, Elton Euler, Guilherme Geest and Vanessa Cesnik, explored and expanded the concepts proposed by these theoreticians and developed an instrument named "Map of the Characters", which structures individual character analysis, identifying the percentage of each character trace from the presentation of each trace in the body's own parts. He also developed a technique, the "Body Analysis", that recognizes, from the body structure, behavioral and emotional patterns. This information about the disposition of character traits allows the description of the way of thinking, acting, and feeling of an individual in face of daily situations. In Body Analysis, the body analyst can offer feedback to the analyzed,

enabling answers to adversities and easing problems that appeared based on the divergence between a person's character traces. In this context, we have seen that the interference of mind-body dualism in the development of diseases has determined the emergence of several theories that evaluate this relation. Freud suggested that inside the body there is a mind. Reich proposed that mind and body are one, and Lowen recognizes the individual as a complex relation between body, mind, and spirit. The concept of character was discussed throughout, and the term traces was introduced when Reich linked patterns of body structure to psychic formation, whereby similar body formations show similar behaviors/feelings. Lowen systematized Reich's fundamentals and classified character structures into schizoid, oral, psychopathic, masochist and rigid. In order to access a person's mind through the shape of their body, Brazilian researchers designed an instrument called "Map of Characters" and developed a technique, "Body Analysis".

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