

CHAPTER 3

THE PSYCHOANALYTICAL THEORY OF SIGMUND FREUD

part 2

Dr Hermann Swart

hswart@sun.ac.za

The Development of the Personality

- **Psychosexual Theory:** Focuses on the development of the sex drive
- Progression from one phase to the next due to changes in the source of the sexual drive energy
- **Oral Stage** (first year of life)
- **Anal Stage** (the second year)
- **Phallic Stage** (third to the sixth year)
- **Latent Stage** (sixth to the twelfth year)
- **Genital Stage** (from puberty onwards)

The Development of the Personality: The Oral Stage

- Ranges from birth to the end of the first year
- Lips and mouth primary erogenous zone (source of sexual drive energy)
- Weaning from breast / interrupted feeding frustrates the oral sexual drive and is perceived as punishment
 - Displacement – pillow, dummy

The Development of the Personality: The Oral Stage

- Excessive cuddling could make transition to next stage difficult (fixation, regression)
- Simultaneous development of death drive
 - Directed at external objects (biting during feeding)
- Ego and Superego begin to develop (Id is inborn)
 - Baby acquires knowledge about the external reality
 - This knowledge lays foundation for the development of the Ego
 - Punishment and reward: first moral rules are absorbed into the Superego

The Development of the Personality: The Oral Stage

- Fixation in this stage:
 - Oral Personality Type
 - Dependence on others
 - Narcissism
 - Excessive Optimism
 - Jealous and envious
 - Reaction Formation – opposite characteristics

The Development of the Personality: The Anal Stage

- Second year of life
- Anus and excretory canal are most important erogenous zone (main source of sexual drive energy)
- Toilet ('potty') training important for development of personality in this stage
 - Important for absorbing social rules
 - Punishment and reward further develops the Superego
- Expression of aggressive urges:
 - Excrete at the wrong time
 - Refusal to excrete

The Development of the Personality: The Anal Stage

- Fixation in this stage:
 - Anal Personality Type
 - Excessive neatness
 - Thriftiness
 - Reaction Formation – opposite characteristics

The Development of the Personality: The Phallic Stage

- 3yrs old to 5/6 yrs old
- Boys and Girls start developing along different lines
- Boys develop **Oedipus Complex**
 - Penis becomes main source of drive energy for boys
 - Develops sexual desires in relation to mother
 - Jealous of the father
 - Ridicule and punishment by others for this behaviour is experienced as a threat of castration (**Castration Anxiety**)
 - Defense mechanisms: repression and identification
 - Imitates the father, and develops Superego

The Development of the Personality: The Phallic Stage

- Girls develop **Electra Complex**
 - Girl observes she has no penis and holds mom responsible for this
 - Envy her father (**penis envy**)
 - Develops sexual desires in relation to father
 - Jealous of the mother
 - Defense mechanisms: repression and identification
 - Imitates the mother, and develops Superego

The Development of the Personality: The Phallic Stage

- Overly strict Superego (developed in this stage) can lead to Mental Disorders in later life
- Overly strict Superego can develop if:
 - Father is too strict (son internalizes these rules via identification)
 - Father is often or permanently absent
 - Father is not strict enough

The Development of the Personality: The Latent Stage

- 5/6 years old until puberty
- No new physical source of sexual drive energy
- Due to identification in Phallic Stage, children concerned with mastery of gender-roles

The Development of the Personality: The Genital Stage

- Puberty until the end of life
- Increase in sexual drive energy (multiple sources)
- Reawakening of pre-genital stage sexual wishes
- Repression is no longer sufficient to cope with the conflict between sexual urges and moral code
- A man falls in love with a woman who reminds him of his mother
- A woman falls in love with a man who is a suitable substitute for her father

Optimal Development of the Personality

- Freud interested in explaining and treating psychic disturbances
- Humans fall on a continuum of psychic disturbance (from mostly healthy / not very disturbed to not at all healthy / mentally disturbed)
- **Genital Character** personality type:
 - The genital stage of development is reached without any fixations on earlier stages
 - Strong Ego and a Superego that is not overly strict
 - Ego is capable of effective reality-testing
 - Uses the most effective defense mechanism (sublimation)

Views on Psychopathology

- When the Ego is too weak to handle the anxiety caused by the conflict between the Id and the Superego
- Historical causes include:
 - Fixation in a stage of development
 - Development of an Ego that is too weak
 - Development of a Superego that is too strict
- Contemporary causes: stem from drastic change in lifestyle or during transition from one stage to the next

Views on Psychopathology

- **Neurosis**
 - Develop because the Ego cannot handle the conflict between the Id and the Superego
- **Personality Disorders**
 - Fixation and the consequent regression to a pre-genital developmental stage
- **Psychoses**
 - Inability of Ego to deal with Anxiety
 - Total withdrawal from, and distortion of, reality
 - Ego disintegrates to the point that it cannot function by the reality principle any more

Implications and Applications: Interpretation and handling of Aggression

- **9.1, 9.2, & 9.3 for self-study**
- Aggression stems from our inherent death drive that is diverted (projected) outwards onto others
- Explanations for a sudden increase in violence:
 - Relaxation of the moral code in the area concerned
 - High levels of aggressive drive energy in the area
- May be managed by creating opportunities for sublimation of aggressive drives

Evaluation of the Theory

- Biological versus Psychic Determinism
- Freud's theory widely used beyond the field of psychology
- Criticisms of Freud's theory:
 - Vagueness and ambiguity of his concepts
 - Can explain past behaviour but cannot predict future behaviour
 - How relevant is his theory in modern South Africa?