

CHAPTER TWO:

Sigmund Freud: Psychoanalysis

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe the development of the psychoanalytic approach to personality.
2. Provide a foundation of psychoanalytic thought through the study of its founder, Sigmund Freud.
3. Describe the structure of personality: the id, the ego, and the superego.
4. Explain the concepts of defense mechanisms against anxiety.
5. Detail the psychosexual stages of personality development.
6. Describe free association and dream analysis used by Freud for assessment.
7. Explain the extensions of Freudian theory with ego psychology and Object Relations Theory.

OUTLINE

- I. The Life of Freud (1856-1939)
 1. Freud was born in Moravia in 1856. His father was a Jewish wool merchant. Since the age of five, Freud lived most of his life in Vienna, Austria. Freud had a passionate, sexual attachment towards his mother and childhood hostility towards his meek father. Many of his childhood experiences would influence his theories later in life. There were eight children in the family, but Sigmund had special privileges, such as his own room. Studying incessantly, Freud entered high school a year earlier and became fluent in several languages. Freud trained to be a physician and researched fish and eels. Freud also experimented with cocaine, before it became illegal. Freud unknowingly harmed a friend by prescribing cocaine and had used cocaine for himself.
 2. Because Freud lacked an independent income, he entered private practice in Vienna. He studied with Jean Charcot in Paris and learned how to use the technique of hypnotism for the treatment of neurosis.

3. Freud became convinced that sexual conflicts were the primary cause of all neuroses. Freud claimed that childhood fantasies of sexual events were quite common for all children. Whether these memories are from true events or just sexual fantasies is controversial today.
4. Freud's attitude toward sex was negative and felt that sex was degrading, because it contaminated the mind and body. Freud, although having children, felt resentful toward his sex life with his wife. Freud diagnosed himself, as having an anxiety neurosis as he learned to psychoanalyze himself through the study of dreams. He was able to recall his dreams and interpret their meanings.
5. Freud began to publish articles and books and he also presented papers at scientific meetings. His disciples or followers included Carl Jung and Alfred Adler. Jung later broke with Freud in disputing Freud's approach to psychoanalysis. Freud received an honorary doctoral degree at Clark University in the United States in 1909, where his theories were warmly welcomed. By the 1920s and 1930s Freud was having much success, however he was to die several years later. Freud's books were burned by the Nazis and he fled to England where he died in 1939 by an overdose of morphine that was given deliberately by his physician.

B. Instincts: The Propelling Forces of the Personality

1. **Instincts** are the basic elements of the personality, the motivating forces that drive behavior and determine its direction. Instincts, such as hunger and thirst, are internal. These instincts motivate people to behave in a way that satisfies the need. When the body is in a state of need, we become motivated to restore and maintain equilibrium by satisfying the need. These instincts are the source of energy for human behavior, but this energy may be expressed in a variety of interests, preferences, and attitudes.
2. The *life instincts* are oriented toward growth and development and the psychic energy manifested by the life instincts is the **libido**. According to Freud, the most important life instinct is **sex**. Sex becomes our primary motivation, such as in erotic wishes. *Death instincts* are the opposite of life instincts and one component is the aggressive drive which compels us to destroy, conquer, and kill.

C. The Levels of Personality

1. There are two levels of personality, according to Freud. The

conscious corresponds to its ordinary everyday meaning. The *unconscious* is the invisible portion of personality below the surface. The unconscious becomes the major driving power behind all behaviors and we are not able to control this portion.

D. The Structure of Personality: Id, Ego, and Superego

1. The **id** is the reservoir for the instincts and the libido. The id is powerful in the structure of personality because it supplies all the energy for the other two components. The id functions to increase pleasure and avoid pain, so id is driven by the *pleasure principle*.
2. The **ego** is the rational master of the personality and is driven by *reality principle*. The purpose of the ego is to help the id obtain tension reduction in the personality. The **superego** is the internal moral rules of conduct, which forms whether we are perceived as being good or bad. The superego is a powerful force in its quest of moral perfection.

E. Anxiety: A threat to the Ego

1. Freud described **anxiety** as an objectless fear to a specific object that induced it. When we cannot cope with anxiety, when we are in danger of being overwhelmed by it; the anxiety is said to be traumatic.
2. There are three types of anxiety. **Reality or objective anxiety** involves a fear of tangible dangers in the real world. **Neurotic anxiety** has its basis in childhood, in a conflict between instinctual gratification and reality. The third type is **Moral anxiety** which results from a conflict between the id and the superego. This is a fear of one's conscience.

F. Defenses against Anxiety

1. If rational techniques to reduce tension do not work, then the person may resort to one or several **defense mechanisms**. Freud believed that defenses must, to some extent, always be in operation. These mechanisms deny or distort reality and operate unconsciously.
2. **Repression** is an involuntary removal of something from the conscious awareness. **Denial** is related to repression and involves denying the existence of some external threat or traumatic event that has occurred. One defense against a disturbing impulse is to actively express the opposite impulse, which is called **reaction formation**. Another way of defending against disturbing impulses is to attribute them to someone else.

This is called **projection**. **Regression** is the defense mechanism where a person retreats or regresses to an earlier period of life that is pleasant and free of frustration and anxiety. **Rationalization** is a defense mechanism that involves reinterpreting our behavior to make it seem more rational and acceptable to us. If an object that satisfies an id impulse is not available, the person may shift the impulse to another object. This is **displacement**. Finally, **sublimation** involves the altering of the id impulses to more socially acceptable behaviors.

G. Psychosexual Stages of Personality Development

1. Each of these stages is defined by an erogenous zone of the body. In each developmental stage a conflict exists that must be resolved before the infant or child can progress to the next stage.
2. The **oral** stage lasts from birth until some time in the second year of life. This stage is where the infant's principal source of pleasure is the mouth. Since the infant is in the primary care of the mother, the infant loves the mother and is satisfied. The **anal** stage begins about the age of 18 months, when a new demand, toilet training, is involved. Defecation, Freud believed, produces erotic pleasure for the child, but with the onset of toilet training the infant has to delay this pleasurable act. In the fourth or fifth year, the **phallic** stage begins. The focus shifts from the anus to the genitals, where the child again has to control their impulse in manipulating their genitals. The **Oedipus complex** is used by Freud to describe a boy or girl who desires to have sexual relations with their opposite sex parent. The boy or girl sees the same sex parent as a rival for their affections, so they may become hostile or jealous of the parents' love relationship. A girl would develop **penis envy**, because she believes she may have lost her penis. In **castration anxiety**, a boy would be afraid of losing his penis if the father was to discover the boy's love for his mother. The **latency** period lasts for five or six years where the sex instinct is dormant. The final stage is the **genital** stage, which begins at puberty. In this stage, the adolescent must conform to social sanctions and taboos that exist concerning sexual expression, but conflict is minimized through sublimation.

H. Questions About Human Nature and Assessment in Freud's Theory

1. In Freud's system there is only one ultimate and necessary goal in life: to reduce tension. Freud found little he liked about humanity. He was deterministic in his viewpoint of people and judged them harshly.

I. Assessment in Freud's Theory

1. Freud considered the unconscious to be the motivating force in life. He developed **free association** in which he would ask the patient to express spontaneously every idea and image that came to the patient's mind. Freud would then analyze and interpret these associations. Some memories might have been too painful to recall. Freud called these moments resistances. **Dream analysis** was used to assess what dreams represent, in symbolic form, along with repressed desires, fears, and conflicts.
- I. Research in Freud's Theory
1. Freud's major research method was the **case study**. These types of studies are neither replicable nor generalizable to other people. Freud did not keep verbatim records of his therapy sessions, so the data may have been incomplete, consisting of what he last remembered. Some critics have suggested that Freud's patients did not actually reveal childhood sexual experiences, because, in most cases, those experiences never occurred. Freud's cases were restricted to young, unmarried, upper-class women of good education; not a very broad sample of the population of his time.
 2. Since Freud's death, many of his ideas have been submitted to experimental testing. Some Freudian concepts—the id, ego, superego, death wish, libido, and anxiety could not be tested by the experimental method. Researchers found no evidence to support the psychosexual stages of development or a relationship between Oedipal variables and sexual difficulties later in life. Research has been done in the area of **subliminal perception**, which supports the idea that people may be influenced by stimuli of which they are not consciously aware. In research findings, too much or too little **ego control** is considered maladaptive, while high **ego resiliency** is positively correlated with IQ, good grades, and even popularity. **Catharsis** is popularly expressed as having an ability to express emotion to reduce anxiety and depression. In more negative settings, research has shown that subjects under much stress use **displacement** as a viable option which researchers conclude that anger is maintained and more likely to be expressed in an aggressive manner. A person who uses **repression**, and therefore pushes their memories from conscious awareness, is more likely to be identified as personally and emotionally threatened by recall of previous traumatic events or by negative experience in the present. The efficacy and impact of dream interpretations, psychosexual personality types, aggressiveness and age, and overall personality types have been researched with mixed results. Incidentally, research into **Freudian slips**, which is forgetting or substitution in usage of speech, indicates

that hidden anxieties can have their embarrassing moments when we speak. Finally, the area of research into **repressed memories of childhood abuse** indicates that a person can indeed forget these memories for years. However, evidence has also been shown that **false memories** can easily be implanted and appear to be real to the person or even as threatening as an authentic or real memory.

J. Extensions of Freudian Theory

1. **Anna** Freud was Sigmund's youngest and most favored daughter. At age 22, Anna began four years of psychoanalysis conducted by her father. He was later criticized for analyzing his own daughter. Analyzing one's child was a serious violation of Freud's rules for the practice of psychoanalysis. She devoted her life to her father and his system of psychoanalysis. Anna worked with children, expanded the role of the ego, and argued that the ego operates independently of the id. Anna Freud clarified the operation of the defense mechanisms, which may be her most significant contribution to psychoanalysis.
2. **Object relations theories** focus more on interpersonal relationships than on instinctual drives. They place particular emphasis on the mother-child relationship, suggesting that the core of personality is formed at infancy. The object relations theorist also see as critical the emergence in the early years of a strong sense of self and the maturing of relations with objects other than the mother. **Heinz Kohut's** interest is on the formation of the nuclear self, which he described as the foundation for becoming an independent person. **Melanie Klein** formulated a system of personality development that focused on the intense emotional relationship between infant and mother. Emphasizing the first 5 to 6 months of a child's life, Klein assumed babies are born with active fantasy lives that harbor mental representations (images) of Freudian id instincts, which the images temporarily satisfy. **Margaret Mahler**, a pediatrician, observed the relationship that developed between the infant and mother. She argued that newborns are incapable of distinguishing between themselves and everything else that is not themselves. The infant must learn how to separate from the mother, which involves psychic energy in interpersonal or object relationships rather than the sexual energy that Freud proposed.

K. Reflections on Freud's Theory

1. Psychoanalysis has contributed and influenced psychology from the early 20th century in the study of personality and motivation in psychology. Many of the Freudian concepts, such as the role of the unconscious, the importance of childhood experiences in

shaping adult behavior and the operation of defense mechanisms, have been absorbed into contemporary psychology.

However, a growing number of people are choosing less expensive and time-consuming treatment programs. Freud's case study approach raises issues by experimental psychologists. Freud's emphasis on past behaviors, unhealthy behaviors, and concepts of inferiority of women are criticized. Sigmund Freud gave personality theorists a solid, challenging base on which to build.

CLASS DISCUSSION TOPICS

Class Discussion Topic 2.1

Students are to discuss the use of drugs, such as cocaine, in Freud's time. There was no Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to require tests to be run on animal and human subjects for safety. Was Freud really responsible for the death of one of his friends in giving him a lethal dose of cocaine? Was Freud using "good practice" when he prescribed the medication? Do you believe, based on the text and your own research, that Freud was addicted to cocaine well beyond middle age? Have students break up in groups to discuss these questions and then present their findings to the whole class.

Class Discussion/Exercise Topic 2.2

Brainstorm the origins of anxiety on the board with your students. Name some environmental, social, physical and mental causes of anxiety. Now take at least two items from each category and construct a neurotic patient. This patient will be role-played by one student as another student takes the role of the therapist trained in psychoanalysis. Have the therapist use the free association method to bring to the conscious the anxieties that have been listed for the patient.

STUDENT PROJECTS

Student Project 2.1

Freud used the case study method to study his patients. Unfortunately, Freud did not use verbatims, (writing down what the client would say, immediately after a therapy session). If Freud was here today, he may well have used an audio or video tape recorder; since he avoided writing notes down right after his session. For this project, the student could list three advantages and three disadvantages in the use of tape recorders by students. The students in your class could also do a "mock" video or audio recording of a session with someone using the techniques of dream analysis and free association popularized by Freud.

Student Project 2.2

Have students (in class or an online environment) submit a video/audio "mock" session of a psychoanalytic session. This could be an individual or even a group project. Students would use the techniques of dream analysis and free association popularized by Freud.

Student Project 2.3

In this project, the student is to consider the superego. Freud suggested the superego is the moral restraint that is needed, combined with the id and the ego. The following website suggests a link between the superego of Freud and the moral and religious viewpoint of a "Higher Power". The student is to read the article and explain the concept of this kind of "Higher Power Superego" in their own words. Does the author of this article believe that Freud would have come to this conclusion about the superego, if he had not rejected his own religious background? Defend your answer.

Click on the Web: <http://www.earthtym.net/conscience.htm>

Student Project 2.4

The following web article will help the student critically examine Freud's superego and the schools of psychoanalysis and the goals of psychotherapy. Students are to write a five page critique of the superego and how this concept might be related in psychoanalysis.

Click on the Web: <http://freud.org.uk/education/topic/10575/subtopic/40017/>

ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARD

Each student is to answer the following questions by giving their own opinions. TWO CAUTIONS:

A. When you share personal information; remember, this information is NOT confidential.

B. Be nice, encouraging, and uplifting when you respond to another person.

1. Freud voiced strong opinions about religion. In your own opinion, (1) what were they; and, (2) what is your opinion of his views?
2. Freud's clients seemed to be mostly female. (1) Explain, in your own words, **why** he might have chosen women almost exclusively for his work in therapy. (2) Do you believe he was successful in helping his clients? Explain your answer.