

Describe and evaluate one or more psychodynamic explanations of personality development. (24 marks)

One of the key elements of Freud's theory of personality development is conflict, and to understand how these conflicts arise we first have to look at the structure of the personality. Freud believed that personality has three parts, known as the tripartite. Firstly the id, this contains innate sexual and aggressive instincts and is located in the unconscious mind. The id works in accordance with the pleasure principle, with the emphasis being on immediate satisfaction. Then the ego, this is the conscious, the rational mind and it is developed in the first two years of life. It works on the reality principle. It takes into account what is going on in reality and it acknowledges that acting impulsively can hurt us. Then finally the superego, this develops during the phallic stage and it is the child's conscience and sense of right and wrong. It is formed when the child adopts many of the values of the same sex parent. It is said that there is conflict between the three parts.

Evidence into the tripartite personality is Solms, who used PET scans to provide support for the concept of the id and the ego. During REM sleep the rational part of the brain is inactive and Freud's theory would say that the ego does indeed become suspended while the id is active during dreaming. But the activation synthesis study disagrees with this evidence. This then shows on the whole that there is evidence that there are three different parts in the brain as there are different parts active at different times.

The ego has a difficult time dealing with the conflict between the three parts of the personality and therefore it uses defence mechanisms to protect itself and reduce anxiety. Some of the main defence mechanisms are repression: this is where a painful thought is kept out of the conscious mind, to protect himself, it is also said to be the most powerful of the defence mechanisms. Displacement: this is where we unconsciously redirecting an emotion from the person who caused it onto a third party. Denial: there is where we simply deny the existence of something that is threatening.

William's carried out research to prove that people do use defence mechanisms as way of protecting themselves from distress. She found that one third of women they interviewed who had been previously sexually abused as children did not have any recollection of such events. Of those who did recall, 16% reported difficulty in recalling. There are problems with this there is sample bias, no consent from the participants and also this

research is unethical.

The next step is the psychosexual stages and their effects on the personality. Freud states that the personality develops in stages; the oral stage, the anal stage, the phallic stage, the latency stage and the genital stage. Too much or too little attention at either of the stages will lead to a fixation and develop the child's personality in later life.

Research into this was done by Blum and Miller, who studied 8 year olds to see if those with a focus on their mouths also had oral personalities. They gave each child an morality rating and they then tested the children by seeing if they would eat ice cream even though they were full from lunch. They also found a correlation between orality and social isolation. But there is major criticisms for this research. For instance, the oral personalities don't manifest themselves until childhood. So their findings are meaningless. Also Fisher and Greenburg reviewed studies of oral and anal personalities and they concluded there is good evidence in these types but no evidence that these types relate in any way to early experience.

The research which was carried out by Freud, consisted of case studies, these were extensive interviews with a small sample of middle class Venetian women. His theory of normal development was based on retrospective recollections of childhood from abnormal individuals. Criticisms of his theory are that there is sample bias as it was carried out on a small number of the same sex. The information was done retrospectively and Freud didn't interview any children to base his research on childhood.

Bandura disagrees with Freud as he believes that it is more social than psychodynamic as he states that it is social factors surrounding a child which will determine someone's personality.