The Application of Psychoanalytical Structure Analysis in Film—Taking *Hard Candy* as an Example

Haoyu Zhang$^{(\boxtimes)}$

University of Southampton, Southampton SO17 1BJ, UK
zhanghaoyuyx777@163.com

Abstract. Freud's theory of personality is the core of psychoanalytic theory regarding the three personalities, ID, ego and super-ego, which interact with each other to achieve a state of psychological equilibrium in a person. If the structure is out of balance, a person can develop a psychological or mental illness. This theory can be used for better film productions, especially in the area of setting up characters. This paper will explore the relationship between psychological structure and characters, focusing on the psychological constructs of the characters in Hard Candy. This paper will use a combination of textual analysis and case studies to research how psychological structure theory provides a psychological basis for establishing the characters in the film. The psychological structure of Hard Candy's characters and their motivations are in line with the logic of the psychological structure theory, which makes it convincing and enjoyable for the audience. The psychological world of the protagonists in the film is very complete with the audience being able to find the roots of the characters' actions from both the perspective of the libido drive and childhood experiences. As a result, Hard Candy can be used as a typical film to explain the significance of psychological structure theory for screen plays.

Keywords: psychoanalysis · psychological structure · *Hard Candy* · setting of characters

1 Introduction

Film and psychoanalysis were born almost at the same time, by which time the two disciplines have become linked increasingly closely. The connection between these two fields can provide us with more research possibilities and broader perspectives [1]. The characters in some of the current works, such as Tiny Times, are very problematic. Because the characters' personalities do not match their actions and deeds, which leads to misperceptions among the audience. This is particularly problematic because of the author's poor construction of the characters' psychological worlds, leading to unsuccessful psychological development.

This paper will use theories from psychoanalysis to research characterization in film, in particular the theory of psychological structure as suggested by Freud. Because

psychological structure provides a useful psychological foundation for films in terms of playwriting, in terms of better building characters. The psychological structure is divided into a triad, ID, ego and super-ego, with the triad of personalities together controlling the actions of the person. The effective use of personality traits in establishing a character can give the different roles their own personalities and make the plot more plausible. Hard Candy, an American horror film released in 2005, is a wonderful portrayal of the psychology and spirit of its characters. Through the study of this film, we can better understand that characterization can be done with reference to the theory of psychological structure, as this creates characters with a certain psychological basis.

This paper analyze the theory of film characterization building and psychological structure theory by textual analysis and case study, and uses the film "Hard Candy". The essence of characterization in film is to show the audience the inner world of a role, so a strong character cannot be separated from a realistic psychological construction. The psychological structure theory provides a good psychological basis for the creation of films to a certain extent, by offering a more realistic and reasonable psychological motivation.

2 The Psychological Structure

The theory of psychological structure is an important theory for the study of the deeply spiritual nature of humans by Freud. He divided the psychological structure of the person into three parts, ID, Ego, and Super-ego, which are the basis for all psychological activities and social behaviors of human beings [2]. The three personalities guide a person's words and actions, which are a deep inner force. Hence, personality theory allows for a good analysis of human mental activity and the identification of potential psychological problems.

2.1 ID, Ego and Super-Ego

The three personalities follow different principles that together guide the psychological activities of the person. ID is an instinct that people have from birth and is the most basic personality in the structure of the personality. It follows the "pleasure principle', avoiding pain and satisfying as much as possible of one's primitive desires or impulses. Moreover, ID is not limited by the rules, regulations, and morals of the society in which people live, as it only follows the individual's own innermost desires.

The Ego follows the "reality principle" and acts as a regulator. The Ego is constantly learning according to the environment in which the individual grows up, and then continuously changing through the influence of the education it receives later in life. In addition, Ego not only controls the instinctive desires and impulses arising from ID within a rationally permissible range, but also controls the influence of Super-ego on the person. Due to the presence of Ego, the three personality forces can be well maintained in balance.

The last personality is the Super-ego, which follows "moral principles". The Super-ego seems to reflect the external world within the person, motivating the person to comply with the moral standards of society. This means that if a person does not live up to his

or her inner standards, he or she may be condemned by his or her conscience and may even do something to harm himself or herself. At the same time, this is the 'leader' of all personalities. It both limits the desires of the ID and guides the Ego in its regulation.

2.2 The Link Between Personalities

ID pursues happiness, Ego pursues the harmony of real life, and Super-ego pursues human perfection. The three personalities restrain each other to a certain extent and reach a state of balance. This means that there is an interplay between the three personalities to help regulate the person's psychological state. Only when all personalities are in balance does the person develop in a healthy and normal way. If this balance is disturbed, the person will have psychological problems. Normally, the balance between ID, Ego and Super-ego is not easily disturbed, as the personalities adjust positively to ensure that the balance is maintained. However, if a person's own psychological structure fails to regulate or is disrupted by powerful forces from outside, the balance of the psychological structure is disrupted, and the person suffers a mental breakdown. Conflicts between personalities are intensified and a fight commences, which cannot be effectively regulated by the person's own power.

The conflict between the three personalities can lead to different psychological states in people, therefore showing up in different forms in the individual. When the personality system is in a state of dissonance, ID may drive people to satisfy their desires regardless, and the individual may even pay a heavy price for this. It is probably because the forces of ID are too powerful whilst other forces are relatively weak. The regulating role of Ego cannot effectively hold the development of ID by itself, and the leading role of Super-ego cannot control the other two personalities, which leads to a situation where a person is controlled by his or her ID and does as it pleases. On the other hand, sometimes a person's Super-ego is so powerful so that it overpowers the development of their own ID and Ego is not able to regulate it well. It may lead to a person's desires being suppressed so much that the person falls into repressed emotions. By observing a person's words and actions it is possible to infer the distribution of different personality forces in order to analyses their psychological state. That is why psychological structure is a useful way to explore the inner world of people, whereby some psychological problems are reflected in the degree of coordination between personalities.

3 Psychological Structure in Film

3.1 Character Setting

The success of the setting of the characters seems to determine the quality of the script. It is the greater the realism and believability of the characters that makes the storyline more convincingly developed. This is because it is the inner force of the characters that really leads to the development and result, which is in a way the most significant point of a good script. The attitudes and actions of people when faced with an emergency all hint at the true desires of the characters [3]. As a result, when playwrights want to create an exciting and logical story, they have to take into account the internal needs and desires of

their characters. As psychological structure can be very helpful in building a character's inner world, it is an effective psychological basis for setting up a character. Playwrights can use this to better present the inner character and desires of their characters to the audience. When the audience can better relate to these messages from the characters, they can see a more realistic character and the storyline will then become more realistic and interesting.

3.2 The Role of Psychological Structures

The use of psychological structure in film can be of some effective help, particularly in two ways.

Firstly, playwrights can use psychological structures to better set up characters, meaning that they increase the realism and watchability of their characters. Which one of a character's triple personalities dominates determines whom the character will become. Different characters have different defining personalities, which creates a recognizable and diverse character. The audience can see his or her true desires in the choices and decisions he or she makes in the film. For example, a character with a dominant ID personality may exhibit impulsive traits because the power of ID drives the character to follow their truest thoughts to the extent possible. A pragmatic person might be forced by the moderating effect of his or her overpowering Ego personality, which is why the character must take too much account of realistic principles. When the Super-ego personality is more strongly developed, the state that expresses itself in a person may be that the character is a highly virtuous and strict person. This is due to the binding power of the Super-ego personality, constantly demanding that the character follow social and moral standards. The playwright highlights the character's personality traits through the energy distribution of the different personalities in the character, thereby allowing the audience to better accept the motivation for the character's actions.

In addition, psychological structures can help playwrights better create dramatic conflicts between characters. Usually, dramatic conflicts arise from the inner world of the protagonist or between different characters. The conflict between a character's triple personalities can lead to great fluctuations in the character's inner world. When ID, Ego and Super-ego come into conflict as the three main factors affecting a person's personality, the desire of whichever personality the character will eventually choose to complete is an indication of the greater strength of their personality [4]. When ID's desire, Ego's regulation, and Super-ego's restraint cause personality conflicts, the characters' own contradictions intensify and the interplay between the triple personalities may attract the audience's attention.

On the other hand, unexpected dramatic effects can also be created when characters dominated by different personalities meet. There are also huge differences between the characters due to the distribution of their personality powers, which leads to different choices and actions being taken by the characters. Sometimes the characters have the same goal, while other times they disagree, or even split into two opposing camps. These lead to varying degrees of dramatic conflict, and the story develops accordingly.

4   Hard Candy

Hard Candy is a low-budget movie, which is deeply loved by audiences for its portrayal of the characters' psychological changes and psychological construction. This article will introduce the way of portraying the two main characters in the film and show how the psychological structure is explained in the film.

4.1   Character

4.1.1 Jeff

Jeff is a pedophile, and this desire dominates all his actions. Although he clearly knows that it is immoral and illegal, he cannot resist this attraction. This is his unconscious id. At the end of the film, Jeff is forced to choose death to preserve his social profile, which shows his super-ego. The super-ego is influenced by the social environment to follow moral principles, which is why Jeff would rather pay with his life than let his ex-lover and others find out his secret.

At the beginning, Jeff's ID personality dominates, so he indulges his primal desires. ID personality gives more priority to the true desires of people's hearts than to morality and law. Characters who are controlled by too much ID personality may lose their sense of morality, which may lead them to go astray. The screenplay emphasizes the state of the character being too much under the control of ID, which can go some way to creating a character with sufficient motivation. However, Hayley's punishment evokes more energy from Jeff's super-ego personality, which leads to a conflict between the two personalities within him. Jeff's super-ego overcomes his ID and the character changes dramatically.

4.1.2 Hayley

Hayley can take on the role of an avenger in the movie [5, 6]. She executes her plan of punishment for Jeff by making up lies and using herself as bait to attract Jeff (create a persona for herself). This shows that she is also fully aware of her sexual agency [6]. She uses violence to punish Jeff physically and psychologically, which reflects her id personality driving all her actions. In addition, Hayley's super-ego personality is reflected in the extent to which she is influenced by her family and society. There are two basic types of personalities, extroverted and introverted. The introverted person places more importance on his or her inner world, while the extroverted person is easily influenced by surroundings [7]. Hayley displayed a certain degree of extroversion, and the character was influenced by her mother. The main line of the movie establishes the character based on the entanglement between innate character and acquired social influence.

The playwright also does a good job of building Hayley's psychological structure so that the character's words and actions have some psychological basis. Hayley's super-ego is powerful, which is the basis for her actions all the time. The overpowering super-ego personality requires the character to take the moral high ground to judge others and restore order to the world, which is why Hayley commits insane acts of punishment. Both characters, Jeff and Hayley, are overly dominated by one personality force that ego is unable to regulate effectively, resulting in both doing extreme and crazy things. If there is no balance between the three personalities, the characters' personalities will lean towards one strong personality after the personality struggle.

4.2 Reasons for Psychological Problems of the Characters

4.2.1 The Drive of Libido

One of the major reasons why people may develop psychological problems is the control of Libido. Freud believed that human behavior was driven by Libido, a biological or sexual instinct [8]. Libido is a powerful internal force that makes people satisfy ID desires as much as possible, even to the extent of ignoring the requirements of moral and social rules. The supremacy of ID desires leads to the weakening of other personality forces. The person's ego is not well regulated, and the super-ego loses its original restraining effect. Once the inner psychological structure of a person loses its original equilibrium, the person may develop psychological problems. When a person is dominated by the powerful force of the ID, there is a risk of falling into the trap of primordial desires, and the person is dominated by Libido.

Moreover, when the desires of ID are infinitely magnified, it becomes difficult for person to satisfy all the needs of Libido, at which time the person has to find new ways to satisfy the growing desires of ID. Libido is closely linked to the sexual urge, but it sometimes not only refers to physical pleasure, but also includes other desires. The fulfillment of some violent, ugly, unnatural desires is also seen as sexual gratification [9]. Therefore, people who are subjected to too much control by Libido not only show an increased need for sex, but also abnormal desires such as violence.

In the film, there are two main ways for Jeff's character to obtain sexual satisfaction. The first is to take a lot of photographs of pedophilia as a photographer. The second is to use the opportunity of a job to physically touch young girls and commit aggression.

4.2.2 Experience in Childhood

Another vital reason for psychological problems is the experience of childhood. Childhood impressions may lead to a person's behaviors when they become an adult. The experiences may be forgotten to some extent, but they are always clearly present in people's unconscious mind influencing what they do [10]. Unconscious thoughts belong to the realm of ID and they become part of people' original desires. This explains the fact that beloved childhood objects or pleasant memories may become preferences that persist for the person. On the other hand, those painful childhood experiences can also remain tormenting, which may lead people to try to compensate for the person they once were. People who want to alleviate their mental suffering may transfer it to something else, called 'Libido transference' [7]. Those unsatisfied childhood desires or huge mental pains may produce alternative gratification in people' adulthood, meaning that the desires that arose under the control of Libido are transferred to other areas. This is the way in which a powerful psychological protection system works in human beings.

The origin of Jeff's pathological desires comes from his childhood experiences of being punished, and the punished brought Jeff a strong sense of shame. In order to alleviate the mental stress and suffering caused by shame, Jeff transferred the painful emotion to venting his desire for the young girl through the transfer of sexual desire, so that Jeff punished the young girl, and then the punishment was transferred to him to the young girl. This allows him to vent the injustice he suffered as child and transfer his resentment and punishment to the young girl.

5   Conclusion

In general, good characterization in film requires the screenwriter to show the audience the richness of the character's inner world so that the character's actions, words and deeds are consistent with his or her identity. The flexible application of psychological structure theory can, to a certain extent, help the screenwriter to create the inner world of the character so that the character can be successfully set up. The three parts of the psychological structure, ID, Ego and Super-ego, are responsible for the different psychological fields that together influence a person's personality. ID controls the unconscious and gives the person some primitive desires. Super-ego drives the person to control their desires in order to conform to social and moral standards. Ego regulates all personalities to achieve a state of balance and maintain the person's mental health. Personalities complement each other, but sometimes they also create conflicts. Hard Candy, as a film that successfully builds up the psychology of its protagonists, provides a good reference to help us study the link between screenplays and psychological structure theory. Thus, this paper focuses on the psychological basis of setting up characters in Hard Candy, which is the psychological basis for shaping characters and setting up conflicts.

Freud's psychoanalysis has a large and complex theoretical system, and this paper only focuses on the reference significance of psychological structure for the screenplay. In future research, more can be done to explore the links and complementary learning between the two disciplines of psychoanalysis and film. At the same time, only one film has been selected as an example for analysis, there are still many films that successfully portray the psychology of characters deserving future research.

References

1. Albano, L. (2013). Cinema and psychoanalysis: Across the Dispositifs. *American Imago*, *70*(2), 191–224. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26305047#metadata_info_tab_contents
2. Hu, Y. (2022). Analysis of the film Dreams in the perspective of psychoanalysis. *West China Broadcasting TV, 43*(01),88–90.
3. Field, S. (2005). Screenplay: The foundations of screenwriting. Delta.
4. Pradipta, M. A. (2019). THE ANALYSIS OF ID, EGO, AND SUPER EGO OF YURI ORLOV IN LORD OF WAR MOVIE BY ANDREW NICCOL (Doctoral dissertation, DIPONEGORO UNIVERSITY). http://eprints.undip.ac.id/77079/1/13020112130057_Michael_Advendri_Pradipta_Final_Project.pdf
5. Zipes, J. (2017). The Trials & Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood. Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203700433-2/trials-tribulations-little-red-riding-hood
6. Hayton, N. (2011). Unconscious Adaptation: Hard Candy as Little Red Riding Hood. Adaptation, 4(1), 38–54. https://academic.oup.com/adaptation/article/4/1/38/6889?login=true
7. Cui, T. (2022). Analysis of Hard Candy in a Psychoanalytic Perspective. Home Drama, 8, 166–168.
8. Zong, Y. (2013). Analysis of the Application of Psychoanalysis in the Film Hard Candy. The World and Chongqing, 30(08), 59–61.
9. Freud, S. (2012). New follow the lectures on the introduction to psychoanalysis. BoD–Books on Demand.
10. Freud, S., & Strachey, J. (1996). The interpretation of dreams (Vol. 4, p. 1900). New York: Gramercy Books.