Oedipus Complex

By Martrea Crawford

In psychoanalytic theory, the term Oedipus complex denotes the emotions and ideas that the mind keeps in the unconscious, via dynamic repression, that concentrate upon a boy's desire to sexually possess his mother, and kill his father.[1][2] Sigmund Freud, who coined the term "Oedipus complex", believed that the Oedipus complex is a desire for the mother in both sexes (he believed that girls have a homosexual crush for their mother); Freud deprecated the term "Electra Complex", a term which was introduced by Carl Gustav Jung, although some books still erroneously attribute the term to Freud. The Oedipus complex occurs in the third — phallic stage (ages 3–6) — of five psychosexual development stages: (i) the Oral, (ii) the Anal, (iii) the Phallic, (iv) the Latent, and (v) the Genital — in which the source libido pleasure is in a different erogenous zone of the infant’s body.

In classical, Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the child’s identification with the same-sex parent is the successful resolution of the Oedipus complex and of the Electra complex; his and her key psychological experience to developing a mature sexual role and identity. Sigmund Freud further proposed that girls and boys resolved their complexes differently — he via castration anxiety, she via penis envy; and that unsuccessful resolutions might lead to neurosis, paedophilia, and homosexuality. Hence, men and women who are fixated in the Oedipal and Electra stages of their psychosexual development might be considered “mother-fixated” and “father-fixated” as revealed when the mate (sexual partner) resembles the mother or the father.