

# The psychodynamic and the biological perspectives psychology essay



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Michael's behaviour can be described using the psychodynamic perspective. This has its roots in Freud's psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was born in Czechoslovakia (Nicholas, 2008). His interest in neuroanatomy led him to believe that behaviour is caused by an unconscious conflict between our instincts and the social norms of life (Naidoo, Townsend & Carolissen, 2008). According to Freud, instincts are life's driving forces and they focus mainly on sex (libido) and aggression. He believes that unconscious thoughts that people are not aware of motivate behaviour. This is described using an ice-berg (Naidoo et al., 2008). Freud's methods of studying behaviour began with hypnosis. However he felt this failed and moved to free association where patients simply spoke. In this process "Freudian slips" were revealed. This is a slip of the tongue which almost accidentally reveals a repressed memory, traced to early childhood. Our mind represses thoughts that are threatening. This became known as "The talking cure" because through talking Freud found the root causes of behaviour that he needed to treat (Hergenhahn, 1999). Freud also used dream analysis - a system of symbols to decode the meanings of dreams (Carver, 1992). However, Freud's theories lacked evidence, but he was very influential and psychoanalysis evolved into the less radical psychodynamic perspective (neo-Freudian).

According to Sheier (1992) psychodynamic behaviour is a set of processes that are always in motion. Swiss Carl Jung (1875-1961) believed he was psychotic himself. He created principles based on studying behaviour. He used word association tests, hallucination study and dream analysis (Naidoo et al., 2008). The Austrian Alfred Adler (1870-1937) is known for his concern

with positive human relationships (Scheier, 1992; Hergenhahn, 1999). This can be linked to the humanist perspective. Adler believed that humans are free to determine their own fate. His methods are very childhood based, focussing on birth order studies, first memories and mannerisms (Hergenhahn, 1999). Today people can study behaviour using case studies and interviews. It is not a scientific method.

The next perspective that can be used to understand Michael's behaviour is the biological perspective. According to Coon (2012) it explains behaviour "in terms of biological principles such as brain processes, evolution and genetics." It has strong links to abnormal behaviour such as depression. Depression is caused by a large amount of a chemical serotonin in the brain. One of the main theorists is the American James Olds. He used a method of electrical stimulation to the brain to study how it evokes animals and humans. He commonly referred to it as reward and punishment (Thompson, n. d.). Another American Roger Sperry, did split brain research and received a Nobel prize for his findings (Forest, 2002.). In this perspective, methods are used to study inheritance, such as family resemblance. Levels of chemicals in parents' brains and their offspring's can be measured and compared. It has been found that temperament and sociability are inherited. Offspring will share their parents' desire for attention and activity (Scheier, 1992). Today this perspective is considered scientific. According to Bernstein (2012) "high-tech scanning devices" such as MRI's can be used to measure thought processes and levels of chemicals that effect emotions and behaviour. Social studies can be used and extensive records are kept for research purposes.

This psychology is making great progress in neuroscience and the development of robots.

These two perspectives differ scientifically. The biological perspective uses the scientific method to prove its theories. Its effects can be measured and confirmed. The psychodynamic has some scientific findings, but it is mostly theory based. Freud used a lot of introspection (Nicholas 2008). Principles are applied in case studies which form the basis of research findings (Coon, 2012). A combination of the two is required to explain Michael's behaviour.

Both these perspectives agree that Michael's feelings of sadness, anxiety and "emptiness" could be based in childhood. Because of Michael's parents' depression, he may not have received positive reinforcement as a baby. This harsh memory could have been repressed. The feeling of rejection due to his divorce has resurfaced this repressed memory and unconsciously causes him to behave depressively (Kalat, 2011). The lack of positive reinforcement relates to the behaviourist approach too. His depressed feelings in his teen years is explained using the biological perspective as well. He could have had high amounts of serotonin in his brain from childhood. The problem remained unresolved so the depressive chemical remains in his brain as an adult. As a result of this, other chemicals needed to create energy are not being produced. This explains his feelings of fatigue and the inability to remember things. His parents also suffered from depression. Michael could have inherited their temperament and anxious feelings. His genes affect his emotional nature (Scheier, 1992). Using Adler's theory that behaviour depends on positive human relationships could explain Michael's feelings of sadness. Michael probably had a lonely childhood. As a teenager he wouldn't

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have been sociable because of his feelings of depression. Due to his divorce there is another lack of positive human interaction. This has manifested into his adult behaviour. Lack of social behaviour can relate to a lack of a desire for activity. Because he is sad, he does not feel the desire to exercise or concentrate. The imbalance between satisfying his instincts and his need for social conformity could be why he struggles to make decisions (Carver, 1992).

Clearly both perspectives are needed to understand Michael, because they each have different strengths and weaknesses. People did not appreciate Freud's idea that humans have no control over their behaviour. Biological psychologists agree with this argument, because we cannot control genes and chemical generation. A strength of the psychodynamic approach is that it takes nature and nurture into account, whereas the biological perspective does not. The psychodynamic is more positive and less radical than psychoanalysis. It's very useful in helping people deal with their repressed thoughts. A problem with the biological perspective is that it claims behaviour is similar between parents and offspring because of inheritance of genes, but the behaviourists believe that behaviour could have been learned by observing their parents (Coon, 2012).

Clearly it is necessary to use multiple perspectives to even attempt to understand Michael's behaviour. Observable actions and scientifically proven aspects need to be looked at because each person is unique (Bernstein, 2012). Case studies, interviews, tests and scans need to be used in conjunction to make a diagnosis. In just the biological and psychodynamic perspectives there were many theorists who made a large impact on <https://assignbuster.com/the-psychodynamic-and-the-biological-perspectives-psychology-essay/>

psychology. It is important to understand their contributions in order to study psychology today. Michael has made a positive choice to consult a psychologist to help him overcome his depression. By exploring all of the above and using adequate therapy, Michael can create a positive balance in the forces of his life and have mental health (Coon, D, 2012).