

# Compare and contrast the theories of personality essay sample

[Psychology](#), [Personality](#)



Personality is an intriguing component in psychology vital for perception of human beings. Different theories of personality adopt different levels of explaining features of human beings. Two theories meet the conditions of personality and theories of development, Freud's psychoanalytic theory later followed by Erikson's psychosocial theory.

Freud's theory of personality development relates to his theories of personality structure and motivation. His topographical model of personality organisation in psychoanalysis saw psychic life represented by three levels of consciousness. Methods of free-association, analysis of slips of the tongue and interpretation of dreams identified aspects of the unconscious mind.

The conscious mind comprises of sensations and experiences apparent to the individual. It is a small, limited aspect of personality which is conscious briefly yet can be quickly submerged into preconscious or unconscious mind.

The preconscious 'available memory' consisted of experiences which are not conscious, but can be commanded with minimum effort into awareness. It bridges the unconscious and conscious.

The unconscious is the deepest layer in the human mind. It consists of disturbing and emotionally significant ideas and memories, this influences the conscious and preconscious minds. Freud believed that behaviour is shaped and directed by impulses which are forces of the unconscious.

Freud believed that personality 'psychical apparatus' has a tripartite division known as the structural model. The components are the id is unconscious,

the ego and the superego, both components of all three consciousness.

Personality structure is made up of id impulses, the unconscious, all three.

The id is the biological component of personality. A mental agency comprising everything inherited as Freud believes babies are “ bundles of id” the other two develop later. Sexual and aggressive instincts are fixed and inhibitions are free, laws and rules are disobeyed. It operates on a primitive basis, free from inhibition. The id is the original personality system it exposes the immediate discharge of psychic energy produced by biological drives. Psychic apparatus is fuelled by psychic energy, hence the id. However when tension is created the id seeks immediate gratification and to reduce excitement therefore the id obeys the ‘ pleasure principle’ which regards nothing. Freud thought this as ‘ infantile’ personality, pre-socialisation. The id was primitively a reflex however if this was true development would be hypothetical. Freud identified two mechanisms the id uses to rid tension, reflex actions and primary process, a formation of a mental image or object to satisfy the basic aim, distinction is left to the ego.

The ego is psychic energy ‘ borrowed’ from the id to direct externally. The ‘ executive’ of personality which engages in secondary process of thinking. The ego obeys the reality principle, preserving gratification until either object or environment condition which could satisfy it has been found. Unlike the id the ego has a moral code, however like the id it is amoral.

The superego is the final stage to morality. Developed by norms and values of society, it is divided into two sub-components, the conscience, acquired by

punishment, and ego-ideal, approval and reward. It is developed when self-control replaces parental control, it controls the id and persuades the ego to change goals.

The ego holds back the unconscious which tries to break through to dominate the conscious. It uses defence mechanisms such as denial, repression, regression, projection, reaction formation and identification with aggressor.

Erikson, also a psychoanalyst, accepted Freud's tripartite theory of the structure of personality yet he focused more upon the ego and had less concern for the id and superego. He believed that the ego influences development. He also accepts Freud's three levels of consciousness.

Freud saw personality development tied to development of sexual instinct (libido) which passes through stages. Significant others also affect child's behaviour in each stage, Freud also emphasised drive. The distinction of two groups of instincts, life instinct (eros) which include libido and death instinct (thanatos) comprising aggression are other identifications in development.

The theory of development is based on genetics and sexual energy. He theorised that there are four universal stages of psychosexual development in the formation of personality. each stage is embarked by a primary erogenous zone. Fixation and frustration overindulgence are factors in each stage. fixation occurs when a child is stuck' in one stage due to frustration or

overindulgence. Development is an interaction between biological timetable of change and the environmental or social context in which it happens.

The oral stage (0-1) sees the mouth as a zone. It is divided into receptive sub-stage and aggressive sub-stage. Fixation would see excessive oral stimulation in later life. Excessive oral stimulation pleasure in sucking would be aggressive.

Libido then moves to the anal region (1-3). Fixation would result in an excessive interest in physiological function later in life. Restriction in this stage would lead to sub-stage anal-retentive personality. The next sub-stage leads to an anal-expulsive personality, excess in the stage.

The phallic stage is when sex differences are noticed (3 to 5/6). this is when conflict arises, known as the Oedipus complex and the Electra complex.

Boys' erotic love for their mothers and jealousy for their fathers as well as the fear of castration leads the boy to identify with the father. The Electra complex sees the girl's envy of the father's penis and blame of the mother. Turning to the father for love she adopts the role of the mother hoping for replacement for her anatomical deficiency.

The latency period (5 to puberty) is when the child falls 'victim' to 'infantile amnesia', and represses sexual preoccupations. The child develops new skills and acquires knowledge. The balance between the tripartite system is greater here than anywhere else.

At puberty the libido focuses again on the genitals, the genital stage. The opposite sex is a huge influence here in relationship formation. However there is a 'homosexual' stage where the same sex has sexual energy directed towards them. If traumatic experiences in early childhood with fixations, adjustment during this stage is virtually impossible.

These stages show that early stages of development leave an imprint to varying degrees. He identified two major personality types - the oral and the anal.

Erikson's theory has also made a significant contribution to psychological theory and represents and assesses Freud's theory in perspective. He is identified as an ego psychologist, however he does not neglect biological or social factors in his theory. He sees the reciprocal interplay of biological, behavioural, experiential and social factors. Erikson's 'eight ages of man' represents his original contribution to personality. The stages are governed by epigenetic principles of maturation.

The first psychosocial stage corresponds to Freud's, trust versus mistrust (0-1). The quality of care in which a baby receives determines the view of the mother and other people in general. If their needs are met a sense of trust is developed, if not mistrust. Mistrust is the first crisis which can develop into depression in children and paranoia in adults. Crisis in trust can also have consequences in future development. The crises are not permanently resolved but will reappear. The resolution of the conflict is termed hope a foundation for religion.

Autonomy versus shame and doubt (1-3\_ is when muscle systems are maturing. The child wants to be independent yet failure can lead to doubt. If parents are impatient or too strict conflict can arise such as ' double-rebellion defect', resulting in regression to oral activities. firm training helps to develop ' self-control' without loss of ' self-esteem'.

Initiative versus guilt (3-5) is when development proceeds. Trying out developing abilities and achieving new goals. If reinforced initiative will develop if not guilt can be exaggerated by the Oedipus complex. Central to Freud yet a bigger feature for Erikson.

Industry versus inferiority (7-12) sees teachers and peers as significant others. Concerned with work it is a major development form. If doubt arises inferiority can set in however this can develop further if there is any other difference.

Identity versus role confusion (12-18) sees the two major influences in a human's life. A balance is needed between the constant and the changing aspect of the self. However during toddlerhood, starting school and adolescence the balance is harder to maintain. Again social and peers groups affect identification. Sex role is also essential for the development of a sense of personal identity. If stresses cannot be matched identity development can be jeopardised, this is an identity crisis. Fidelity emerges from adequate resolution of the ego identity role confusion crisis.

Intimacy versus isolation is involved with later life and as both psychologists believed in ' settling down' and sexual intimacy as well as capability of

intimacy for a healthy person. The danger is in self-absorption or avoidance of interpersonal relationships. In extreme isolation antisocial or psychopathic personality types arise. Crisis sees love.

The final stage reflects the completion of efforts and achievements. Maturity integrity versus despair, not marked by a crisis by evaluation of ego development.

Erikson accepted Freud's stages yet thought they did not go far. He saw development as proceeding throughout life-cycle completion of efforts and achievements. Maturity integrity versus despair, not marked by a crisis by evaluation of ego development.

Erikson accepted Freud's stages yet thought they did not go far. He saw development as proceeding throughout life-cycles. Erikson's additional last three stages constitutes adulthood, however, Freud's stages finish with adolescence. Both structures however are very similar. Freud however did not emphasise the role of socialisation of the individual, especially the patterns of behaviour which cultures see desirable and individuals need to fit into culture.

Erikson's psychosocial stages are different than Freud's psychosexual stages as Freud does not concentrate unlike Erikson on the direct interaction between the individual and the social environment in which it lives. however, both theories adopt a ' crisis' stage involving struggles and conflicts between opposing personality characteristics.



Erikson's theory has an ego identity concept, this is a resolution of a crisis at each developmental stage. Freud however was only concerned with neurotic not mental health. A conflict within the ego sees an emotional disturbance, this relates to the theory. Every stage in Erikson's theory sees an interaction with the self and the environment.

Both psychologists agree to a biological basis to development which are genetically determined. The genetic stages also show in both theorists' stages. Freud believes that the baby becomes gradually socialised gaining an ego and superego. For Erikson at all times an organism (id), (ego) and member of society (superego). The individual has to be ready in all dimensions to move on.

Erikson's epigenetic principle sees stages as pre-determined. He looks at the healthy personality. Freud stresses conflict and neuroticity.

The nature of Freud's work is the major difference as he made judgement during Victorian times as well as using limited samples of middle class children and women.

In conclusion both theories have similarities and differences. The main differences are that Freud emphasised the first six years of life affecting development, whilst Erikson saw development as a life long process, spanning childhood to adulthood, hence the last three stages. He has inspired the 'life-span' approach in developmental psychology. Consequently Freud's is perhaps accurate as a childhood development theory. Erikson's an adulthood personality theory.

Freud concerns himself with parents' involvement with the child's emerging personality, Erikson sees it as a historical matrix.

However, many differences Erikson is a strict Freudian he is loyal to the essential principles of Freud's work and his work is an extension of Freud.