

# Compare and contrast at least three alternative theories

[Psychology](#)



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The initial thirty years of psychology being a separate discipline grasped human experience as its subject matter, using the observation of one's own mind (introspection) as the primary research method. The attention paid to consciousness should come as no surprise, being fundamental to everything we do (Rubin and McNeill, 1983 cited in Gross, 2005).

The idiom 'psychodynamic' alludes to the driving forces within the personality that induce behaviour. In particular, 'psychodynamics' denote the unconscious conflict between the diverse structures that create the personality. It is based on the assumption that the personality and reactions of a person are the product of interplay between the conscious and unconscious mind, genetic structure and the person's environment (Feltham and Dryden, 2004).

While Sigmund Freud pioneered psychodynamic theory, the approach incorporates the theories which are rooted from Freudian ideas, such as Jung (1964), and Adler (1927). These theories will be compared and contrasted throughout this discourse.

It is difficult to know where a description of Freud's concepts should begin, as they are closely intertwined (Jacobs, 1992 cited in Gross, 2005). However, recognition of certain key issues were stressed by Freud himself as being essential to the practice of psychoanalysis, the method of psychotherapy from which almost all others are derivative. These key issues include, the unconscious, repression, transference and infantile sexuality (Gross, 2005).

Largely influenced by his study of dreams (Nelson-Jones, 2006), Freud proposed that the personality comprised of three levels. The first of these is <https://assignbuster.com/compare-and-contrast-at-least-three-alternative-theories/>

the conscious, of which people are fully aware of at all times (Gross, 2005).

The transitory state of consciousness has no memory unlike the unconscious and preconscious, material flows into consciousness from either the external world or internal drives. Speech is one way that enables internal events such as ideas or thought processes to become conscious (Nelson-Jones, 2006).

The second level is called the preconscious, where awareness can be obtained if the individual's attention is directed to it (Gross, 2005). It is dormant and capable becoming conscious, unlike unconscious which is repressed and is not easily accessible. Although material can remain in the preconscious, it often enters consciousness without the need of psychoanalytic intervention. The preconscious may be likened to a screen of censorship between the unconscious and consciousness. In the case of dreams, unconscious material is modified by the preconscious before making its way into consciousness (Nelson-Jones, 2006).

The third level is the unconscious, this is extremely inaccessible, unwanted thoughts and memories are pushed out of a person's conscious or preconscious mind but even repressed material will influence thoughts, feelings and behaviour (Gross, 2005). Material from the unconscious is heavily censored from coming into awareness. The purpose of psychoanalysis is to make sense of the material accessible, however during this process there will be strong resistances mostly because of the forbidden sexual connotations that are being repressed (Nelson-Jones, 2006).

Further key issues within Freudian, or psychoanalytic theory include the structure of mental apparatus, that being the Id, Ego and Super Ego

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(McLeod, 2003), three connecting systems that constantly interact with one another in order to regulate the behaviour of the individual (Hough, 1998).

The Id is a container of primitive or innate instincts and impulses that Freud theorised as the ultimate motivation for human behaviour. There are said to be two core drives within the Id. Eros, which is the life instinct relating to love and sex, and Thanatos, the death instinct relating to aggression and hate. The Id is powered by the pleasure principle and is irrational (McLeod, 2003) conceptualised as the deepest part of the unconscious it is often misunderstood as being a container in the mind rather than a particular function (Feltham and Dryden, 2004).

The Ego is the decisive, conscious and rational part of the mind that deals with external reality (McLeod, 2003). Freud supposed that the ego surfaced from the Id to arbitrate between the Id and the external world. Despite being partially unconscious, it serves to mediate between the unconscious and the conscious (Feltham and Dryden, 2004) and is governed by the Reality Principle. From one or two years of age, a child (who started life as a 'bundle of Id') will begin to learn that they must sometimes wait for certain things, and that it is often a good idea to ask, this is the start of the Ego developing, . The Ego is logical, and incorporates problem solving abilities, memory and perception. Skills such as speaking, planning, negotiating and explaining are prominent dimensions of the conscious Ego (Hough, 1998).

The Super Ego, or Morality Principle, is a residue formed within the Ego (Nelson-Jones, 2006) and will develop from around the age of three years. It comprises of internalised values, ideals and moral guidelines, deriving from <https://assignbuster.com/compare-and-contrast-at-least-three-alternative-theories/>

parental and authority figures. The Super Ego is capable of generating guilt when people contravene their personal or societal moral code (Hough, 1998). The function of the Super-Ego is to regulate the demands of the Id via moral influence on the Ego, through fear of loss of love or through fear of aggression from an external or parental authority (Nelson-Jones, 2006). Conflicts may arise with large portions of both functions remaining unconscious (Feltham and Dryden, 2004).

Two of Freud's original followers, Carl Gustav Jung and Alfred Adler, broke away from Freud and formed their own schools (analytical psychology and individual psychology). Although, like Freud, Jung believed that unconscious conflicts shaped the personality, Jung assigned little importance to childhood experiences in comparison (including his own concept of the personal unconscious), but sited significant focus on the collective unconscious which based upon the evolutionary record of human beings (Gross 2005).

Jung's analytical psychology has some of its roots in Freud's psychoanalysis however Jung developed a very different theory and practice of psychodynamic tradition (Dryden and Woolfe, 1996).

In particular, the differences between their theories of the unconscious separated them. Jung distinguished between three levels of consciousness, much like his former mentor Freud, however, Jung went on to diverge from Freudian theory by dividing the unconscious into personal and collective elements (Dryden and Woolfe, 1996). The three levels of Jung's model of the psyche are consciousness, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. Jung had an analogy for consciousness similar to Freud's 'tip of

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the iceberg', and described it as being like an island rising from an immense sea of unconsciousness (Nelson-Jones, 2006).

Consciousness is an intermittent and transient experience as people enter unconsciousness regularly through sleep. People gain an understanding of the external world through a sequence of conscious moments. At the centre of a person's consciousness is the Ego sometimes referred to by Jung as the Ego-Complex. The Ego gives a person a sense of identity and continuity and has both internal and external functions. Its external function is to liaise between consciousness and information from the external world. Internal functions are to provide communicational links between the conscious and unconscious processes (Nelson-Jones, 2006).

The personal unconscious contains material that either has faded over time, been forgotten, repressed or material that has never been sufficiently intense to reach consciousness, yet still somehow entered the psyche (Gross, 2005).

Complexes were discovered by Jung when researching word association and were observed to disturb memory and block the flow of association.

Complexes are an accumulation of associations containing strong emotional content that erupt (sometimes autonomously) into consciousness (Douglas, 2005 cited in Nelson-Jones, 2006). The mother figure is often found to be the cause of disturbances especially in infantile neurosis, resulting in the aptly named Mother Complex which is often linked to homosexuality, impotence or in females the Mother Complex may lead to an exaggerated or neglected femininity (Nelson-Jones, 2006).

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The collective unconscious, unlike the personal unconscious exists from heredity and was never formerly conscious. The deepest layers of the collective unconscious are a form of genetic memory, memories which are universal to mankind (Dryden and Woolfe, 1996). Unlike Freud who believed the unconscious acted as a receptacle for repressed material, Jung believed the deeper layers lose their uniqueness the further they go from consciousness. As the personal unconscious contains mostly complexes, the collective unconscious contains Archetypes. Archetypes are instinctive patterns for both action and mental activity, evolutionary predispositions expressed through symbols which are universally understood, represented in myths, legends and folklore across historical periods and cultural divides. Important personality shaping archetypes include the Persona, Anima, Animus, Shadow and Self (Nelson-Jones, 2006).

Jung's knowledge of physics and the properties and interactions of matter and energy are well represented in his theories. He emphasised the concept of psychic energy, also referred to as libido, expressed through hunger, sex and aggression. This differs from Freud's theory of sex and aggression being the driving forces behind human thoughts and behaviour (Nelson-Jones, 2006). As previously mentioned Jung's theories attach relatively little importance to childhood experiences and focused considerably on his concept of the collective unconscious, containing genetic memory. However, Freud had acknowledged that innate drives reside in the unconscious, the complexity of the representation of these concepts are illustrated in Jung's Archetypes.

Like Jung, Alfred Adler rejected Freud's emphasis on sexuality, stressing instead 'the will to power' and 'striving for opportunity' as motivation to overcome feelings of inferiority experienced by all children whilst growing up (Gross, 2005). One of Adler's original ideas included 'Masculine Protest', which referred to the difference in nature between boys and girls. He put forward that boys were not more naturally assertive than girls because of some innate quality or superiority, rather that boys were encouraged to demand or protest more than girls due to it being considered a masculine characteristic (Boeree, 2006), if they are too submissive or shy they might be ridiculed for being soft, whereas a girl would be praised for her femininity. Adler was determined that both boys and girls had equal capacity to protest, but external factors swayed them to be different, this could be compared to Jung's personal unconscious where associations between how boys and girls should act are gained through personal experience of external factors such as parental figures (Boeree, 2006).

Adler believed in a single drive motivating human behaviour, the desire to fulfil potential and become closer and closer to perceived ideals (Fisher, 2001). Adler initially called this drive 'the aggression drive' referring to the reaction when other drives such as hunger, sexual gratification or to be loved get frustrated. It was Adler's concept of the aggression drive that first caused opposition between him and Freud, who thought it would detract attention from the crucial importance of the sex drive in psychoanalytic theory (Boeree, 2006). However, despite his dislike for Adler's proposal, Freud later went on to conceptualise the death instinct, Thanatos (Boeree,



2006). As mentioned earlier, Thanatos was proposed by Freud to be one of two instincts (life/death) and related to aggression and hate (Gross, 2005).

Adler later went on to call this driving force 'striving for perfection' after also calling the idea 'striving for superiority'. Reflecting the philosophy of Friederich Nietzsche, Adler considered the 'will to power', striving to be perfect, chasing the ideal and also pursuit of becoming better than others as the basic motive of humankind (Boeree, 2006), based on social feeling rather than independent survival instincts suggested by Freud. Adler believed that in order to fully understand a person they must be accepted as unified wholes, rather than a collection of parts and that a person must be observed in their social and physical environment (Fisher, 2001). In addition, Adler's theories of the personality differed by not considering the personality in the traditional sense of internal traits, conflicts, and dynamics, he focused more on a person's way of living or lifestyle, and the way that they handle interpersonal relations and social problems. Finally, Adler believed that lifestyle is more than a mechanical reaction, differing greatly from Freud who thought that events in the past such as early childhood trauma would determine who a person would become. Adler views motivation as a forward motion towards the future, rather than being driven by past. This is called teleology (Boeree, 2006).

In conclusion, the concepts of the unconscious of both Jung and Freud differ in their structure and detail, however both focus largely on unconscious interactions, whether by conflict or through censorship, behaviour is determined mostly on an unconscious level. All three theorists acknowledge

the relevance of childhood experiences in shaping the personality with varying degrees of focus. Adler's theory however, is far more concerned with present, external interactions and conflicts, as well as being focused more on the future than the past. At the heart of Adler's individual psychology is the belief that we all can change, not simply by modifying our behaviour, or acknowledging our mistakes by actually altering our core personality (Stein, 2007). That element of free-will detaches individual psychology from Freud's psychoanalytic theory and Jung's analytical psychology significantly.