The study of personality includes many different theoretical approaches that examine the similarities and differences between individuals. Two paradigms that will be introduced in this presentation are the psychoanalytic and sociocultural theories.

These theories attempt to explain personalities in different ways. They emphasize different factors to explain personality from a variety of vantage points. The sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of socialization on behavior, while the psychoanalytic theory examines unconscious mechanisms.

The key psychoanalytic personality theorists that will be reviewed include the following:

- Sigmund Freud
- Carl Jung

The key sociocultural personality theorists that will be reviewed include the following:

- Alfred Adler
- Karen Horney
- Erik Erikson

Each one of these theorists asked: What makes you the unique individual that you are? Also, each theorist attempted to define the enduring and evolving characteristics that shape human psychology. Most discussions about personality begin with an examination of Freud and his personality theories. He is likely the most quoted—and often the most misunderstood—personality theorist. Regardless of whether or not you find that his theories adequately explain personality, it is important to examine his work as a foundation for the works that have followed.