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# The Role of Dreams, Intuition, and Social Influences on Conscious Decision-Making Processes

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Robert Bouffard

## HPR Reflection

I knew when I had first started thinking of a topic for my honors project last Fall, I wanted to focus on a connection between the unconscious and conscious states of mind. There is large amounts of evidence and biological science to prove that our brain does not necessarily “shut off” when we sleep, so I was particularly interested in wondering how our unconscious thoughts can affect how we behave while awake, especially in terms of decisions. Therefore, I began to research different psychoanalytic theories, ultimately narrowing my research down to the theories and autobiographies of the most renowned psychologists within the field of dream psychology, such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. As I continued to read, I began to notice the connection between the conscious and unconscious exists through the concept of intuition. I realized that our dreams act as a form of decoding past experiences into memory that impact how people think on a daily basis, and continues in a cycle which continues to relate the conscious and unconscious.

Deciding to take on the task of a theoretical-based honors project rather than one based in concrete evidence or statistics was certainly not an easy feat. It required dozens of hours trying to find a correlation or a link between theories where there is no correct answer. This is true for the entire field of psychology. Every concept regarding mental health is subjective and open to interpretation. This is why I felt it necessary to also implement certain social factors into the theory I was developing, such as Uri Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems and Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. These additional theories would add more plausibility in showing how our decision-making processes during the day could also be affected by outside forces as

well, such as social media, our family structures, and the environment we are subjected to throughout our lives.

From the beginning of the project, I had expected to learn more about how people are impacted on a large scale, but in reality, I had learned more about myself over the past few months than I could have imagined. I have used examples of dreams from my own life to generalize for others, as many psychologists have done, but this project was also an enlightening experience that taught me how I behave on a daily basis. This will be incredibly beneficial to me in my journey of working with people in the clinical realm of psychology as well. I will be largely unsuccessful in helping any patients in need of psychological help if I'm unable to understand myself through introspection. It was with the help of this project that I'm better able to comprehend why I make the decisions I do, and though I was unable to accurately find the perfect link as I had hoped, I was genuinely happy with the progress I had made both as a psychologist-to-be and a person during this incredible experience.