

Background

Personality theory is based on three central assumptions

1. The individual has *constructive potential*;
2. The nature of the individual is basically *goal-directed*
3. The individual is *capable of changing*

The individual person- the central figure in the actualisation of his own potential, with the environment playing a facilitating or inhibiting role.

The View of the Person Underlying the Theory

Rogers' fundamental view of the person is humanistic-phenomenological.

Humanistic Approach - He emphasises the *study of the individual* as a whole and the active role that each person plays in actualising his or her own inherent potential.

- Individuals can be trusted to follow a positive course in order to realise their potential and to become the best that they can be.

- Healthy people are aware of their positive and negative attributes, and that the constructive will triumph over the destructive.

The View of the Person Underlying the Theory (cont)

- The environment plays *no more than a facilitating or inhibiting role* in the realisation of the individual's potential.

Phenomenological Approach - The part played by people's subjective experience of their world, impact on behaviour of individuals' *self-concept*.

- The *ideal environment* is one created by circumstances that allow individuals to see themselves exactly as they are, and in which all their potential can be realised.

The Structure of the Personality

The organism

The total individual with all physical and psychological functions, is the central figure who interacts constantly with the dynamically changing world in which he or she lives.

The phenomenal field

Represents the totality of a person's perceptions and experiences, and includes:

a. Perceptions of objects or events outside the person, and the meanings attached to them

b. Inner experiences and meanings that relate to the person himself or herself.

The self-concept

A specific entity of a self that is composed of self-perception as well as perceptions of relationships with others and combined with values that are attached to these perceptions.

The Structure of the Personality (cont)

The self-concept consists of a relatively stable pattern of integrated perceptions, it is flexible and changeable.

The **ideal self** is the self-concept the individual would most like to have.

Psychologically healthy person

- The ideal self is more or less realistic, attainable and in harmony with the self-concept.

- The ideal self provides valuable guidelines for growth and development because it reveals the characteristics and ideals that the individual strives towards.

Psychologically unhealthy person

- The ideal self apparently represents extreme forms of the ideals set by others for the person, and it is not in tune with the real potential of the individual.

The Dynamics of the Personality

Congruent functioning- when the individual's self-concept corresponds with his or her potential

Incongruent functioning- when the individual's self-concept does not correspond with his or her potential.

The role that the self-concept plays in perception and experience and how it affects behaviour.

The Actualisation Tendency - *The purpose of all life* to become that self which one truly is.

The Dynamics of the Personality (cont)

The actualising tendency- an inherent tendency of organisms to maintain themselves and to expand or grow in order to become what they can be.

- The *psychologically healthy or congruent person* is someone whose self-concept and actual potential correspond. The actualisation of the self-concept (self-actualisation) and the actualisation of the whole organism will be in harmony.

The Dynamics of the Personality (cont)

- The *psychologically unhealthy or incongruent person*, the self-concept does not correspond with his or her actual potential.

The Need for Positive Regard *The need for positive regard from others* - Concerns the human being's basic need for approval, appreciation, love, admiration and respect.

- To fill this need, the individual sometimes adopts the wishes and values of another as his or her own and behaves in a particular way to earn esteem.

The need for positive self-regard - People require that esteem from others in order to esteem and feel positive about themselves

The Dynamics of the Personality (cont)

- Plays an important role in determining individual behaviour.

Congruence and Incongruence *Congruence*- the ideal in which the individual is open to and conscious of all his or her experiences and can incorporate them into the self-concept.

A condition of worth- a value taken over from others in order to be accepted

Incongruence- when experiences contrary to the self-concept form part of the phenomenal field



The Dynamics of the Personality (cont)

- Individuals can exclude incongruent experiences from their consciousness by denying them, or they might distort the experiences to make them fit the self-concept.

The Role of the Self-concept in Experience

1. *Experiences may be ignored* simply because at that moment they are irrelevant to the person's needs. At another time, however, the same experience might well be allowed into consciousness.

2. *Experiences may be symbolised* when they correspond with the individual's needs.

The Dynamics of the Personality (cont)

3. *Experiences are denied* access to consciousness because they are contrary to the self-concept.

Subception- how someone determines whether an experience that he or she does not allow into consciousness is a threat.

The Role of the Self-Concept in Determining Behaviour

The denied needs become so strong that they evoke behaviour in which they are satisfied directly, and not through channels that correspond with the self-concept.

The Dynamics of the Personality (cont)

Individuals function ideally when their self-concepts are congruent with their needs and feelings.

The Development of the Personality

The areas of human functioning:

- The interaction between the person's experience and his or her self-concept.

- The crucial role of the self-concept in determining behaviour.

Organismic evaluation process

The organism's functioning is directed towards fulfilling its own needs, and it judges that which is advantageous as positive and that which is disadvantageous as negative

Deals with satisfying only the individual's own basic needs and not those of others.



The Development of the Personality (cont)

The self-concept develops gradually, as a result of the individual's interactions with the social environment in particular and as a consequence of the evaluation of others, and then begins to exert an influence on functioning.

The Development of The Self-Concept

- Individuals attach specific meanings to experiences that involve them and that these are incorporated into the self-concept.

- Meanings and values which are not based on people's own experiences are also incorporated into their self-concepts.

The Development of the Personality (cont)

Significant Others- people who are closely connected to an individual and who help satisfy his or her need for positive regard play an important role in the development of that individual's self-concept.

Unconditional Positive Regard - are accepted by significant others for what they are, just as they are.

- need not full specific requirements to gain the esteem of the significant others and are therefore able to acknowledge all their needs and express their feelings

- individuals' self-concepts are free to include all their experiences and there is congruence between their potential and their self-concepts.

The Development of the Personality (cont)

Unconditional acceptance leads to complete actualisation of potential and allows individuals to realise all their innate abilities.

Conditional Positive Regard - the ideal environment in which individuals' potential can be fully actualised.

- every person will sometimes experience non-acceptance by significant others and will feel worthy only when he or she has fulfilled certain conditions laid down by them.

The more conditional positive regard individuals receive, the more they include conditions of worth in their self-concepts and the more incongruent they become.

Optimal Development

Fully Functioning

The wider the spectrum of experience available to people and the more integrated these experiences are in the self-concept, the better they will know themselves and be able to use their abilities and talents, choose constructive action and realise their potential fully



Optimal Development (cont)

The fully functioning person displays the following characteristics

1. A Growing Openness to Experience

- concerned with a process of psychic adaptation where-by he or she moves away from defensiveness and is increasingly open to experience.

2. An Increasingly Existential Lifestyle

- allows the person to approach experience without a preconceived structure, permitting the experience itself to form and reform the structure from moment to moment

3. Increasing Organismic Trust

- they trust themselves increasingly when choosing behaviour appropriate to a specific situation.

4. Freedom of Choice

- people who have to make career choices, are open to both the positive and the negative aspects of their abilities and to all relevant information available to them.

5. Creativity

- this kind of person will adapt constructively to society but without being a conformist; he or she will be able to adjust to changing environments relatively easily and in a creative way.

6. Basic Reliability and Constructiveness

- is basically good and open to a wide variety of his or her own needs and to the demands of the environment and society, can be trusted to act positively and constructively.

7. A Rich, full life

- person can experience moments of happiness, enjoyment and satisfaction, but adjectives such as enriching, exciting, rewarding, challenging and meaningful.

Views on Psychopathology

The incongruent person who is always on the defensive and cannot be open to all experiences can never function ideally and may even malfunction.

When an incongruent experience on the unconscious level is experienced by subception, it threatens the self-concept and is accompanied by anxiety.

Anxiety- the emotional (affective) response when the self-concept is threatened.

Defence Mechanism

Distortion- the incongruent experience is distorted to fit the self-concept so that the self-concept remains intact and is not disorganised.

Denial- the process whereby experiences that are not congruent with the self-concept are simply ignored and excluded from consciousness.

Malfunctioning

Defensive behaviour reduces the person's consciousness of the threat, but not the threat itself.

Rogers is opposed to attaching labels to people and will therefore not easily categorise behaviour as neurotic or psychotic.

- The more incongruent the person, the more threatened he or she is by experiences, the more defensive he or she is and the more rigid the organisation of the self-structure.

Implications and Applications

Psychotherapy

The purpose of psychotherapy- to provide clients with the opportunity to come to know themselves fully and to reveal their potential.

The Therapeutic Process

- the client is central and must take responsibility for his or her own change.

- therapist acts as a facilitator who creates a climate of unconditional positive regard, warmth and empathy in which the client feels free and safe to allow change and to strive towards congruence and the actualisation of his or her potential



Implications and Applications (cont)

- the individual is given the freedom to exercise autonomous choices and to act creatively, productively, constructively and responsibly.

How the therapist can create a growth-facilitating climate

1. Sincerity or congruence of the therapist

- Clients are most likely to grow if the therapist is really able to be himself or herself in the relationship.

- There has to be congruence between what the therapist is experiencing deep inside, what is in his or her consciousness, and what he or she actually says to the client.

- The therapist is an authentic person.

Implications and Applications (cont)

2. The therapist's attitude of unconditional acceptance, or caring.

- The therapist must be able to care in a non-possessive way, and the client must feel accepted, even though feelings of confusion, fear, fury, courage, love or pride may be expressed at any given moment.

3. The therapist should understand with empathy.

- The therapist is so attuned to the client's world that he or she can clarify not only the meaning of experiences of which the client is aware, but also of experiences that lie just below conscious awareness.

Function of the therapist:

- To observe from the client's frame of reference;
- To observe the world as the client sees it;
- To see the client as he or she sees himself or herself
- To put aside external observations and thereby communicate empathic understanding to the client.

Implications and Applications (cont)

Education

The Jug and Mug Theory

- The instructor, or teacher, is the jug that pours knowledge from above into the passively receiving mug- the student.

The learning experience should be more than gaining knowledge; it should be meaningful to the individual and make a difference to his or her life

Meaningful learning will take place in the following conditions:

a. Pupils should be in an open, accepting atmosphere in which they can explore problems of value and meaning to themselves.

b. Teachers should not force their own feelings on others. They should be sensitive and sympathetic and not just faceless representatives of the syllabus or merely sterile conveyor belts of knowledge



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Implications and Applications (cont)

c. Teachers should approach their students with warmth and acceptance, accept pupils unconditionally and empathise with their fears, expectations and disappointments when they are confronted with new material

d. Teachers should place themselves and their knowledge at the disposal of the pupils, and should also offer a wide range of sources and material. These should be available if the pupils regard them as useful and want to use them, but they should never be forced on students.

A student-centred approach of this nature would require a radical change.

The teacher's role would have to change from that of instructor to facilitator

Implications and Applications (cont)

Compulsory evaluation through tests and examinations give way to a system whereby the pupils themselves decided whether their ability in a particular field should be rated in order to qualify for a specific career or if they qualified for the next level of education.

Measurement and Research

- Rogers opened the therapeutic situation to research.

- Rogers made extensive use of a method of content analysis in examining his therapy sessions

Content analysis- It consists of categorising every word used by the client in relation to himself or herself during therapy.

The self in six categories:

1. Positive or approving;

2. Negative or disapproving;

3. Ambivalent;

Implications and Applications (cont)

4. Ambiguous references;

5. References to external objects and persons; and

6. Questions.

- Rogers used the well-known Q-technique

* subjects organise the statements into nine categories, with the most relevant descriptions in the first category and the least relevant in the last.

- Rogers used questionnaires to evaluate both the therapeutic process and the effectiveness of the therapist.

* measures congruence between the therapist's organismic experience and his or her self-concept.

* measure self-esteem

* the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (BLRI) to measure empathy, acceptance and congruence

The Interpretation and Handling of Aggression



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Implications and Applications (cont)

- People do sometimes choose behaviour that harms themselves or others, cultural influences are responsible for such destructive behaviour.

- A destructive course must be sought in the environment, and that healing takes place in an understanding, accepting atmosphere

- In South Africa, he worked with small groups in the hope that this would lead to the formation of more and more groups that would ultimately make a difference to the whole.

Evaluation of the Theory

Criticism

- The client-centred approach are criticised for not confronting negative, hostile and aggressive feelings, Rogers does acknowledge the existence of negative, destructive feelings like aggression and anger.

Evaluation of the Theory (cont)

- Applying Rogers' theoretical principles to everyday life can also be a problem

- Rogers' distinction between rejection of behaviour and rejection of the person can also be problematic in reality

- Some concepts in Rogers' theory are difficult to define operationally and therefore difficult to verify.

-In education, although the person-centred approach might sound rather idealistic, it does offer valuable principles to teachers

In Summary

- Rogers' theory made a particularly valuable contribution in focusing people's attention on human worth and potential.

- Made the process of therapy accessible to research, thereby creating greater scope for investigation, change and growth.

- Rogers identified for a growth-promoting climate continue to serve as a basis for most therapeutic contexts.



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