

Multiple-Choice Questions

- What did Carl Jung call the shared, inherited reservoir of memory traces from our species' history?
 - Neurosis
 - Archetypes
 - Collective unconscious
 - Inferiority complex
 - Terror management
- Scott Lilienfeld, James Wood, and Howard Garb (2001) wrote, "When a substantial body of research demonstrates that old intuitions are wrong, it is time to adopt new ways of thinking." What were they talking about?
 - MRI test
 - Rorschach inkblot test
 - Freud's work on the id and ego
 - Psychodynamic theories
 - Modern views of the unconscious
- According to the text, many research psychologists think of _____ as an information processor that works without our awareness.
 - the TAT
 - the id
 - repression
 - defense mechanisms
 - the unconscious

Practice FRQs

- Name and accurately describe two projective tests.
- Explain and give an example of the false consensus effect.

Answer

1 point: Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)

1 point: In the TAT, someone is asked to tell a story about a picture.

1 point: Rorschach Inkblot Test

1 point: In the Rorschach, someone is asked to state what he or she sees in an inkblot.

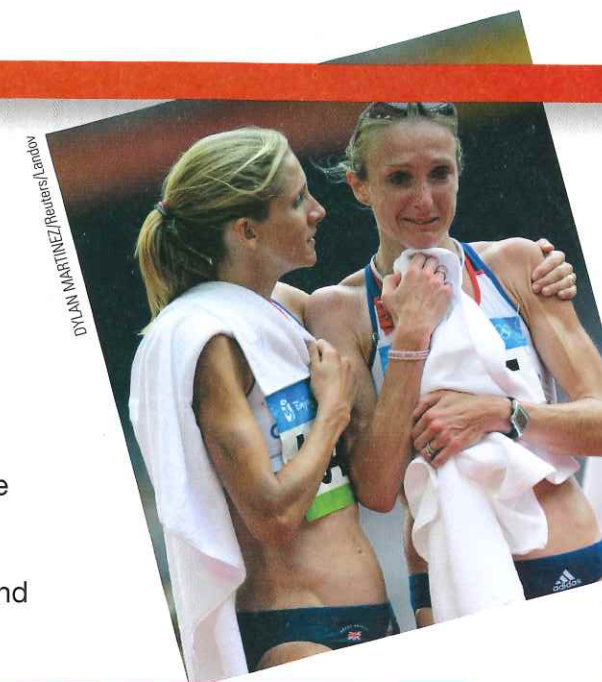
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Module 57

Humanistic Theories

Module Learning Objectives

- 57-1** Describe how humanistic psychologists viewed personality, and explain their goal in studying personality.
- 57-2** Explain how humanistic psychologists assessed a person's sense of self.
- 57-3** Describe how humanistic theories have influenced psychology, and discuss the criticisms they have faced.



- 57-1** How did humanistic psychologists view personality, and what was their goal in studying personality?

By the 1960s, some personality psychologists had become discontented with the sometimes bleak focus on drives and conflicts in psychodynamic theory and the mechanistic psychology of B. F. Skinner's behaviorism (see Modules 27 and 28). In contrast to Freud's study of the base motives of "sick" people, these **humanistic theorists** focused on the ways people strive for self-determination and self-realization. In contrast to behaviorism's scientific objectivity, they studied people through their own self-reported experiences and feelings.

Two pioneering theorists—Abraham Maslow (1908–1970) and Carl Rogers (1902–1987)—offered a "third-force" perspective that emphasized human potential. Like *psychoanalytic theory*, the humanistic theories have been an important part of psychology's history.

Abraham Maslow's Self-Actualizing Person

Maslow proposed that we are motivated by a *hierarchy of needs* (Module 37). If our physiological needs are met, we become concerned with personal safety; if we achieve a sense of security, we then seek to love, to be loved, and to love ourselves; with our love needs satisfied, we seek self-esteem. Having achieved self-esteem, we ultimately seek **self-actualization** (the process of fulfilling our potential) and *self-transcendence* (meaning, purpose, and communion beyond the self).

Maslow (1970) developed his ideas by studying healthy, creative people rather than troubled clinical cases. He based his description of self-actualization on a study of those, such as Abraham Lincoln, who seemed notable for their rich and productive lives. Maslow reported that such people shared certain characteristics: They were self-aware and self-accepting, open and spontaneous, loving and caring, and not paralyzed by others' opinions. Secure in their sense of who they were, their interests were problem-centered rather than self-centered. They focused their energies on a particular task, one they often regarded as their mission in life.

humanistic theories view personality with a focus on the potential for healthy personal growth.

self-actualization according to Maslow, one of the ultimate psychological needs that arises after basic physical and psychological needs are met and self-esteem is achieved; the motivation to fulfill one's potential.



Abraham Maslow (1908–1970)

"Any theory of motivation that is worthy of attention must deal with the highest capacities of the healthy and strong person as well as with the defensive maneuvers of crippled spirits" (*Motivation and Personality*, 1970, p. 33).

Most enjoyed a few deep relationships rather than many superficial ones. Many had been moved by spiritual or personal *peak experiences* that surpassed ordinary consciousness.

These, said Maslow, are mature adult qualities, ones found in those who have learned enough about life to be compassionate, to have outgrown their mixed feelings toward their parents, to have found their calling, to have “acquired enough courage to be unpopular, to be unashamed about being openly virtuous, etc.” Maslow’s work with college students led him to speculate that those likely to become self-actualizing adults were likable, caring, “privately affectionate to those of their elders who deserve it,” and “secretly uneasy about the cruelty, meanness, and mob spirit so often found in young people.”

Carl Rogers’ Person-Centered Perspective

Fellow humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers agreed with much of Maslow’s thinking. Rogers believed that people are basically good and are endowed with self-actualizing tendencies. Unless thwarted by an environment that inhibits growth, each of us is like an acorn, primed for growth and fulfillment. Rogers’ (1980) *person-centered perspective* (also called *client-centered perspective*) held that a growth-promoting climate required three conditions.

- **Genuineness:** When people are *genuine*, they are open with their own feelings, drop their facades, and are transparent and self-disclosing.
- **Acceptance:** When people are *accepting*, they offer **unconditional positive regard**, an attitude of grace that values us even knowing our failings. It is a profound relief to drop our pretenses, confess our worst feelings, and discover that we are still accepted. In a good marriage, a close family, or an intimate friendship, we are free to be spontaneous without fearing the loss of others’ esteem.
- **Empathy:** When people are *empathic*, they share and mirror other’s feelings and reflect their meanings. “Rarely do we listen with real understanding, true empathy,” said Rogers. “Yet listening, of this very special kind, is one of the most potent forces for change that I know.”

Genuineness, acceptance, and empathy are, Rogers believed, the water, sun, and nutrients that enable people to grow like vigorous oak trees. For “as persons are accepted and prized, they tend to develop a more caring attitude toward themselves” (Rogers, 1980, p. 116). As persons are empathically heard, “it becomes possible for them to listen more accurately to the flow of inner experiencings.”

Writer Calvin Trillin (2006) recalls an example of parental genuineness and acceptance at a camp for children with severe disorders, where his wife, Alice, worked. L., a “magical child,” had genetic diseases that meant she had to be tube-fed and could walk only with difficulty. Alice recalled,

One day, when we were playing duck-duck-goose, I was sitting behind her and she asked me to hold her mail for her while she took her turn to be chased around the circle. It took her a while to make the circuit, and I had time to see that on top of the pile [of mail] was a note from her mom. Then I did something truly awful. . . . I simply had to know what this child’s parents could have done to make her so spectacular, to make her the most optimistic, most enthusiastic, most hopeful human being I had ever encountered. I snuck a quick look at the note, and my eyes fell on this sentence: “If God had given us all of the children in the world to choose from, L., we would only have chosen you.” Before L. got back to her place in the circle, I showed the note to Bud, who was sitting next to me. “Quick. Read this,” I whispered. “It’s the secret of life.”

Maslow and Rogers would have smiled knowingly. For them a central feature of personality is one’s **self-concept**—all the thoughts and feelings we have in response to the question, “Who am I?” If our self-concept is positive, we tend to act and perceive the world

unconditional positive regard according to Rogers, an attitude of total acceptance toward another person.

self-concept all our thoughts and feelings about ourselves, in answer to the question, “Who am I?”

A father **not** offering unconditional positive regard:



“Just remember, son, it doesn’t matter whether you win or lose—unless you want Daddy’s love.”

positively. If it is negative—if in our own eyes we fall far short of our *ideal self*—said Rogers, we feel dissatisfied and unhappy. A worthwhile goal for therapists, parents, teachers, and friends is therefore, he said, to help others know, accept, and be true to themselves.

Assessing the Self

57-2 How did humanistic psychologists assess a person’s sense of self?

Humanistic psychologists sometimes assessed personality by asking people to fill out questionnaires that would evaluate their self-concept. One questionnaire, inspired by Carl Rogers, asked people to describe themselves both as they would *ideally* like to be and as they *actually* are. When the ideal and the actual self are nearly alike, said Rogers, the self-concept is positive. Assessing his clients’ personal growth during therapy, he looked for successively closer ratings of actual and ideal selves.

Some humanistic psychologists believed that any standardized assessment of personality, even a questionnaire, is depersonalizing. Rather than forcing the person to respond to narrow categories, these humanistic psychologists presumed that interviews and intimate conversation would provide a better understanding of each person’s unique experiences.

Evaluating Humanistic Theories

57-3 How have humanistic theories influenced psychology? What criticisms have they faced?

One thing said of Freud can also be said of the humanistic psychologists: Their impact has been pervasive. Maslow’s and Rogers’ ideas have influenced counseling, education, child raising, and management.

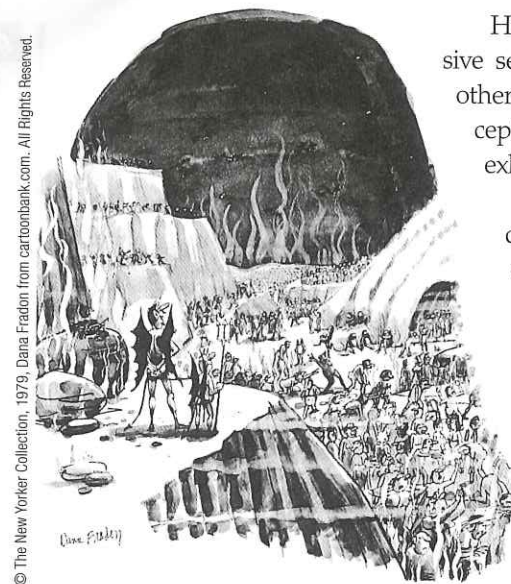
They have also influenced—sometimes in ways they did not intend—much of today’s popular psychology. Is a positive self-concept the key to happiness and success? Do acceptance and empathy nurture positive feelings about oneself? Are people basically good and capable of self-improvement? Many people answer *Yes, Yes, and Yes*. Responding to a 1992 *Newsweek* Gallup poll, 9 in 10 people rated self-esteem as very important for “motivating a person to work hard and succeed.” Given a choice, today’s North American collegians say they’d rather get a self-esteem boost, such as a compliment or good grade on a paper, than enjoy a favorite food (Bushman et al., 2011). Humanistic psychology’s message has been heard.

The prominence of the humanistic perspective set off a backlash of criticism. First, said the critics, its concepts are vague and *subjective*. Consider Maslow’s description of self-actualizing people as open, spontaneous, loving, self-accepting, and productive. Is this a scientific description? Isn’t it merely a description of the theorist’s own values and ideals? Maslow, noted M. Brewster Smith (1978), offered impressions of his own personal heroes. Imagine another theorist who began with a different set of heroes—perhaps Napoleon, John D. Rockefeller, Sr., and Margaret Thatcher. This theorist would likely describe self-actualizing people as “undeterred by others’ needs and opinions,” “motivated to achieve,” and “comfortable with power.”

Critics also objected to the idea that, as Rogers put it, “The only question which matters is, ‘Am I living in a way which is deeply satisfying to me, and which truly expresses me?’” (quoted by Wallach & Wallach, 1985). The *individualism* encouraged by humanistic psychology—trusting and acting on one’s feelings, being true to oneself, fulfilling oneself—can, the critics have said, lead to self-indulgence, selfishness, and an erosion of moral restraints (Campbell & Specht, 1985; Wallach & Wallach, 1983). Indeed, it is those who focus beyond themselves who are most likely to experience social support, to enjoy life, and to cope effectively with stress (Crandall, 1984).

AP® Exam Tip

Frequently, terms that begin with “self-” (like *self-actualization* or *self-concept*) are terms that are grounded in the humanistic perspective.



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"We do pretty well when you stop to think that people are basically good."

Humanistic psychologists reply that a secure, nondefensive self-acceptance is actually the first step toward loving others. Indeed, people who feel intrinsically liked and accepted—for who they are, not just for their achievements—exhibit less-defensive attitudes (Schimmel et al., 2001).

A final accusation leveled against humanistic psychology is that it is *naive*, that it fails to appreciate the reality of our human capacity for evil. Faced with climate change, overpopulation, terrorism, and the spread of nuclear weapons, we may become apathetic from either of two rationalizations. One is a starry-eyed optimism that denies the threat ("People are basically good; everything will work out"). The other is a dark despair ("It's hopeless; why try?"). Action requires enough realism to fuel concern and enough optimism to provide hope. Humanistic psychology, say the critics, encourages the needed hope but not the equally necessary realism about evil.

Before You Move On

▶ ASK YOURSELF

Have you had someone in your life who accepted you unconditionally? Do you think this person helped you to know yourself better and to develop a better image of yourself?

▶ TEST YOURSELF

What does it mean to be "empathic"? To be "self-actualized"?

Answers to the Test Yourself questions can be found in Appendix E at the end of the book.

Module 57 Review

57-1 How did humanistic psychologists view personality, and what was their goal in studying personality?

- The *humanistic* psychologists' view of personality focused on the potential for healthy personal growth and people's striving for self-determination and self-realization.
- Abraham Maslow proposed that human motivations form a hierarchy of needs; if basic needs are fulfilled, people will strive toward *self-actualization* and self-transcendence.
- Carl Rogers' person-centered perspective suggested that the ingredients of a growth-promoting environment are genuineness, acceptance (including *unconditional positive regard*), and empathy.
- The *self-concept* was a central feature of personality for both Maslow and Rogers.

57-2 How did humanistic psychologists assess a person's sense of self?

- Some rejected any standardized assessments and relied on interviews and conversations.
- Rogers sometimes used questionnaires in which people described their ideal and actual selves, which he later used to judge progress during therapy.

57-3 How have humanistic theories influenced psychology? What criticisms have they faced?

- Humanistic psychology helped renew interest in the concept of self.
- Critics have said that humanistic psychology's concepts were vague and subjective, its values self-centered, and its assumptions naively optimistic.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Which of the following theories offers a special focus on the potential for healthy personal growth?
 - a. Neo-Freudian
 - b. Psychodynamic
 - c. Humanistic
 - d. Behavioral
 - e. Functionalist
2. What do we call the process of fulfilling our potential?
 - a. Free association
 - b. Self-transcendence
 - c. Unconditional positive regard
 - d. Self-concept
 - e. Self-actualization
3. Humanistic psychologists often prefer to assess personality by
 - a. having a person write out answers to questions.
 - b. sitting down and talking to a person.
 - c. getting a person to describe what he or she sees in ambiguous inkblots.
 - d. having a person describe their dreams.
 - e. putting a person in a stressful situation to see how he or she behaves under pressure.
4. Which of the following is an example of unconditional positive regard?
 - a. Mr. and Mrs. Prohaska, who have been married for 37 years, credit the success of their marriage to the fact that each has been able to accept the faults of the other without criticism.
 - b. Seven-year-old Michaela gets her allowance each week whether she does her chores or not.
 - c. Ms. Lopez, a second grade teacher, puts a smiley face sticker on her students' papers when they have done a good job.
 - d. John got a promotion and a raise at work after filling in for a sick manager one day and doing a better job than the manager had done previously.
 - e. Chen's parents usually praise him when he does well and ignore him when he engages in minor misbehavior.

Practice FRQs

1. Describe the three conditions that Carl Rogers believed were necessary for a growth-promoting climate.
2. Describe three criticisms that have been made of humanistic psychology.

(3 points)

Answer

1 point: Genuineness, where people are open with their feelings.

1 point: Acceptance, which includes unconditional positive regard, where people are accepted despite their faults and failures.

1 point: Empathy, where the therapist shares and mirrors the feelings of others.