

Carl Rogers and humanistic psychology

Chung & Hyland (2012) *History and
Philosophy of Psychology*. **Pages
241-255.**

Humanistic psychology

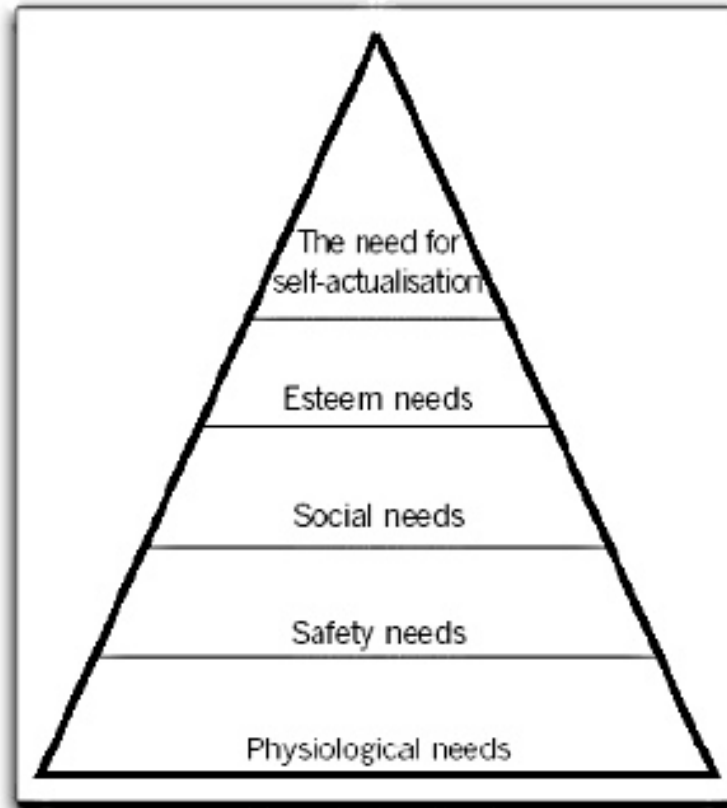
- Third force
 - Humanistic vs Behaviourism vs Psychoanalysis
 - Return of the mind
- Abraham Maslow (1908-1970)
- Carl Rogers (1902-1987)
- Rollo May (1906-1994)
- APA Division 32 (humanistic psychology)
1971

Humanistic psychology

- Phenomenological psychology
 - Study of ‘phenomena’ = the contents of consciousness
- Existential psychology
 - Study of those aspects of consciousness that relate to the meaning of life and the purpose of existence.

Maslow

- Self-actualisation
- Didn't work with mentally ill people – focused on 'human growth'
- Hierarchy of needs



Carl Rogers

- A phenomenological psychologist
 - three types of knowing: subjective, objective and interpersonal
 - use interpersonal knowing to understand the phenomenal field of another person
- A belief that humans are basically good
 - People are good when they are mature or ‘free’ - but bad when they are neurotic
 - people strive towards self-actualisation - becoming the real you.

Rogers' concept of the Self

- Noticed that clients talked a lot about their selves.
- The self is something that is perceived
 - I.e., fits in with theories of perception
- It is organised as a conceptual gestalt
 - I.e., the self isn't made up of lots of different bits and pieces
- It is fluid but retains its essential, unique identify

The self and the ideal self

- The self (actual self or real self)
 - Clients describe themselves as they are now
- The ideal self
 - Clients describe another ‘self’ - the self they would like to be
- The aim of psychotherapy
 - to reduce the discrepancy between the ideal self and self
 - note that this does not imply a particular way of living is good (links to self-actualisation)

Measuring the discrepancy between the self and ideal self

- Called the Q- sort technique
- 100 statements
- Rate each statement on scale 'like me -unlike me
- Rate each statement on scale 'like ideal me - unlike ideal me
- Difference between ratings shows discrepancy between ideal self and self

Therapy

- One aim of therapy is to reduce the discrepancy between ideal self and self
- Research shows that this is the case
- Self actualisation - also Abraham Maslow
 - Rogers has just one form of striving (contrast with Freud)
 - Personality is not fixed (contrast with Freud)

Self-consistency or congruence

- Perceptions about the self
- Experiences about the self - i.e., what happens and how others treat you
- Congruence is the extent to which your self-perceptions are consistent with objective reality
- Warning - don't confuse this with self-ideal self discrepancy

Incongruence

- A discrepancy between perceived self and actual experience
 - e.g., you think you are a poor student but actually get good marks
- Incongruence causes anxiety
 - anxiety results if person unaware of incongruence
- Defence mechanisms are ways of dealing with anxiety

Defence mechanisms

- Distortion - provide an alternative view of experience
 - e.g., student who passes but thinks she is thick says ‘well, it was just luck’ or ‘the lecturer as also stupid’
- Denial - say that experience didn’t happen
 - deny the experience ever happened.
 - Develops a sense of reality which is different from objective reality

Incongruence - some hypotheses

- The greater the discrepancy between an individual's self-description and an objective description, the less perceptual defence
- The less perceptual defence, the more adequate is personal adjustment

Why do are some people more prone to incongruence than others?

- Unconditional positive regard
- Conditional positive regard
- Children brought up with conditional positive regard learn to believe a reality - their parent's reality - that is not their own.

Coopersmith (1967) study of self-esteem in children

- High esteem children (measured with scale)
 - more assertive, independent, creative
- Mothers of high esteem children (interviewed)
 - higher degree of acceptance (interest, affection, love, warmth towards child)
 - Clear demands that were firmly enforced. Preferred reward to punishment and did not use loss of love
 - established extensive sets of rules which recognised rights of child and child's opinions but were strictly enforced

The three conditions needed for therapy

- Genuineness or congruence
 - Therapist must be open and transparent so client can trust therapist
- Unconditional positive regard
 - communicates care for the client in a total unconditional way
- Empathic understanding
 - Ability of therapist to understand the feelings, experiences and their meanings of the client

Two different names for Rogerian therapy

- Non-directive therapy
 - early term - to show that the therapist should direct the client in any direction
- Client centred therapy
 - later term because some therapists appeared uninterested - lack of unconditional positive regard
- Non-directive questioning
 - don't have preset agenda of questions. Ask questions on basis of what client has just said

Process of change

- Change the self-concept, ways of experiencing the self, and change in behaviour
 - Change from using others opinions of the self to using own opinions
 - Becoming less defensiveness
 - Increasing own self-worth
 - Becoming more tolerant of others and better able to deal with frustration

Later concepts of the self - Higgins 1987

- Actual versus ideal self
- Disappointment, dissatisfaction, guilt, depression
- Actual versus ought self
- Agitation - fear, resentment, shame, anxiety

Later concepts of the self :

Markus & Nurius 1989

- Past self
 - What you have already achieved
- Present self
 - What you are doing now
- Future self
 - What you are going to do in the future
- Each of these selves can be used in self-evaluation.
 - Young people are more prone to use future self, old people past self

Rogers versus Freud

- Personality not fixed - in contrast to Freudian theory
- Conscious is important
- Childhood experience is important (similar to Freud)
- People are basically good versus bad

Evaluation of Rogers

- Contributed to humanistic psychology (in contrast to behaviourism and psychoanalysis)
- Importance of the conscious mind
 - Phenomenological psychology
 - e.g., Abraham Maslow and the realisation of human potential - worked mainly with healthy people
 - Existential psychology
 - Derives from existential philosophy - e.g., Viktor Frankl, the will to meaning, logotherapy

Evaluation of Rogers

- Had a major influence on counselling psychology
- Ideas still important today
- Consistent with liberal ideology

And finally:

Which therapy is best?

- The dodo bird effect
- Rosenzweig , S. (1936). Some implicit common factors in diverse methods of psychotherapy: ‘As last the Dodo said, “*Everybody* has won and *all* must have prizes” ’ . *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* , 6 , 412 –15.
- Wampold, 2001