

Chapter 6

Humanistic Personality Theories

Key themes

- Humanistic personality theories
- Maslow's theory of self-actualisation
- Carl Rogers and person-centred therapy
- Evaluation of the humanistic theories of Maslow and Rogers

Learning outcomes

After studying this chapter you should:

- Understand what is meant by humanistic theories in psychology and how they evolved
- Be familiar with the developmental experiences that influenced the theorising of Maslow and Rogers
- Appreciate the Maslow and Rogers conceptualisations of human nature
- Be familiar with Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the motives related to it
- Understand the principles of personality development and the causes of mental illness as described by Maslow and Rogers
- Be familiar with Rogers' conceptualisation of self-actualisation and its importance in development
- Understand the principles of Rogerian counselling, including the importance of the core conditions of counselling
- Be aware of an approach to measuring the self-concept and the ideal self
- Know how to critically evaluate the work of Maslow and Rogers

Introduction

What was your school like? Were you allowed to construct your timetable, decide which subjects to study, have no obligatory assessment? Were the teachers concerned that you had enough time to play and enjoy yourself? This was probably not your experience of school. It is most likely to have had a set curriculum, obligatory coursework, tests and examinations. The theorists that we examine in this chapter suggest that such educational conformity frequently stifles our individuality and creativity as human beings and encourages competition rather than cooperation. There is one school in England that defies this educational conformity. Summerhill was set up by the famous educationalist A. S. Neil in 1923, in Lyme Regis. In 1927 the school was moved to Suffolk, where it still operates today, run by Neil's son.

Neil believed that children must live their own lives, not the lives that their parents or school teachers think they should live. Neil believed that our aim in life is to find happiness. By living different experiences, Neil felt, we will find things that interest us; and this will make us happy and provide us with the motivation to work at these things. He strongly believed that traditional education stifles creativity in most children, and that they lose their love of learning and exploring new ideas. He established Summerhill to provide the ideal learning environment, giving children freedom to choose their interests and to develop their personalities freely within a democratically run community. The Summerhill philosophy exemplifies many of the ideas expounded by the personality theorists who are discussed in this chapter.

There are scheduled lessons at Summerhill; but each child is given a blank timetable, and they are free to attend lessons as they choose. Many new pupils say they have no intention of ever going to lessons again, but such is the culture of the school that they are drawn to participate in learning because the experiences are fun. The basic belief in Summerhill, shared by the theorists who we discuss in this chapter, is that as a species we are inquisitive and want to learn – and that if we are given the freedom to learn, then we will learn. There is no compulsory coursework; there are no tests or examinations. Neil believed that education must be a preparation for life and that children will learn what they want to learn and be happier as a result. He felt that only by giving children the freedom to develop as they choose will their true personalities develop. He believed that assessment, examinations and prizes sidetrack proper personality development. Children in conventional education, he claimed, are socialised into developing in ways that meet the expectations of others such as parents and teachers, and the children's true selves can often be lost in the process.

This is obviously a very contentious stance and one that you may want to discuss further with your fellow students. Do you think it would have been a good experience for you? We have included the web address for Summerhill School at the end of the chapter for those of you who want to know more. In 1999 the school received an unfavourable Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) report from the government school inspectors. The school was in danger of being closed,



Source: Image Source Black/Alamy.

but it took the government to court and actually won the case. From the site you can access the Ofsted report and details of the court case. Summerhill is of interest to us as it practises many of the principles outlined by Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, the two personality theorists presented in this chapter, and we will return to it later.

Both Maslow and Rogers were American psychologists, but European psychology and philosophy heavily influenced their ideas. In this chapter, we will examine the historical roots of the approach that influenced both theorists and helped define the key principles. Each theorist is presented in turn and then the overall approach is evaluated.

Historical roots and key elements of the humanistic approach

In early twentieth-century American psychology, the two main influences were the psychoanalytic tradition and the learning theory approaches that we have covered in previous chapters. Maslow and Rogers were initially educated in the psychoanalytic tradition, and the dominant learning theory approaches played a significant part in their early education as psychologists. However, as neither theorist was comfortable with these approaches, they developed alternative approaches. These approaches drew on the European tradition of existential philosophy, epitomised in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre. There is no one agreed-upon definition of existential philosophy. It addresses what is called ontology, defined as 'the science of being'. Existential philosophers are concerned with how we find meaning for our existence, what motivates us to keep on living. They emphasise the uniqueness of human beings and focus on issues of free will and human responsibility. These existential themes are incorporated into the work of both Maslow and Rogers.

Maslow and Rogers' theories are often described as humanistic personality theories. Several characteristics define humanistic approaches. There is always an emphasis on *personal growth*. Human beings are seen to be motivated by a need to grow and develop in a positive way. Human nature is conceptualised as being positive, unlike the Freudian conception of human nature as innately aggressive and destructive. The focus in humanistic theories is on the here and now. Individuals are discouraged from focusing on the past. While the past may have helped to shape the person you are, you are seen as being able to change. Within humanistic approaches, individuals are encouraged to savour the moment without worrying overly about the past or the future. There is also an emphasis on personal responsibility. Borrowing from the existential philosophers, there is an emphasis on human beings having free will in terms of the choices they make in their lives; and consequently, they are responsible for these choices. Sometimes we assume that we do not have a choice, but the humanists would suggest that this is because we find the alternatives

too hard to undertake. We saw some examples of this when we discussed Albert Ellis' Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy in Chapter 5. Ellis' theory, although classified as a cognitive theory, also shares this humanistic bent.

The final defining feature of humanistic theories is an emphasis on the phenomenology of the individual person. Phenomenological approaches focus on trying to understand individual experience and consciousness. The concept of the uniqueness of each individual and their experience is stressed. Individuals are conceptualised as being the experts on themselves, and humanistic therapists aim merely to help their clients understand what their problems are and not to provide solutions. We will return to this concept in more detail later in the chapter as we consider the work of Maslow and then Rogers in detail.

Abraham Maslow and self-actualisation

The first area we are going to concentrate on in Maslow's work is his view of human nature and human motivation.

Human nature and human motivation

An explanation of the influences that led Maslow to want to focus on what human beings could achieve and what would make them happy is given in the Profile box for Maslow.

Maslow wanted to move from the early focus of psychology on clinical populations and the related psychopathology to explore how to make the average human being happier and healthier. He began with the assumption that human nature is basically good, as opposed to the negative conceptualisation of humans provided by Freud. Maslow described human beings as having innate tendencies towards healthy growth and development that he labelled **instinctoid tendencies** (Maslow, 1954). These positive instinctoid tendencies were conceptualised by Maslow as being weak and easily overcome by negative environmental influences. If the instinctoid tendencies in children are fostered, they will have the capacity to display honesty, trust, kindness, love and generosity and will

develop constructively into healthy individuals. Conversely, if children grow up in an unhealthy environment they can easily lose their positive instinctoid tendencies and grow up to become destructive, aggressive and unloving individuals, engaging in self-destructive and self-defeating behaviour (Maslow, 1954, 1965, 1968, 1970). Maslow suggests that such individuals feature among Freud's case studies, and he acknowledges that psychoanalytic theories and therapies provide useful tools for psychologists having to deal with this disturbed population. However, his wish was to focus on the positive possibilities in human development; he felt that this approach, alongside the work of the psychoanalysts, would then provide a complete theory of human personality (Maslow, 1968).

Maslow's interest was in trying to understand what motivates us to go about our lives and make the choices that we do. As we saw in Chapter 1, this is a fundamental area for personality theories to address. In his early doctoral studies, Maslow had become interested in the needs that animals display, and he demonstrated that it was possible to organise these needs into a hierarchy. The needs lower in the hierarchy must be satisfied before we address higher-level needs. From his observations, he suggested that a

similar system existed for human beings. He described two distinct types of human motivations. The first are **deficiency motives**, that is, basic needs that we are driven to fulfil. These include drives like hunger, thirst and the need for safety and to be loved by someone. Maslow conceptualises these needs as representing something that we lack and are motivated to get. If we are hungry, once we have obtained sufficient food, this need is met. The need then ceases to be a motivator. Maslow gave examples of the economic depression in America in the 1930s, when thousands of people lost their jobs. Feeding their family became the dominant need for many people, so they were happy to get any job that would allow them to achieve their goal. He compares this situation with economically affluent times and suggests that when people are wealthier, their motivational needs change. Hunger is no longer a threat, so they are motivated to get a better house or car, or a more interesting job and so on.

The second type of needs Maslow outlines are **growth motives**, sometimes called **being motives** or **B-motives**. These needs are unique to each individual and are conceptualised as gaining intensity as they are met. He suggests that these needs are about developing the individual's

Profile



Abraham Maslow

Abraham Maslow was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1908, the first of seven children. His parents were Russian-Jewish immigrants. He describes his childhood as being very lonely, and he had a strong sense of not belonging in his environment. He attributes this to his family being the only Jewish family in the neighbourhood. His parents, although uneducated themselves, were keen for their children to be successful educationally and pushed him hard. He describes himself as having turned to books for solace, having few friends. He initially studied law at the behest of his parents, but soon dropped out as he found law uninteresting. He was attracted to study psychology after reading about behaviourism and the learning theory approach (Chapter 4), and his doctoral studies were on the sexuality of monkeys. However, the birth of his first child led Maslow to question the behaviourist approach, feeling that it was too simplistic to provide a real understanding of the complexity of human life. This need to understand human personality became his goal and remained so throughout his life. He first turned to the psychoanalytic tradition (see Chapters 2 and 3), reading widely, undergoing psychoanalysis and interacting with many of the major psychoanalysts such as Adler and Horney, many

of whom had emigrated to the United States to escape Nazism. While finding aspects of psychoanalysis to be interesting, Maslow found the negative view of humanity emanating from Freud's work to be unacceptable. He was increasingly interested in showing that the human race was capable of achieving great feats, and he began his study of what he described as remarkable human beings who had achieved much and were content with their lives (Maslow, 1970). He began by studying two individuals he had met who were high achievers and seemed to have achieved a high level of satisfaction with their lives. The first individual was the Jewish German psychologist Max Wertheimer, who had come to the States to escape the Nazis. Wertheimer had achieved breakthroughs in our understanding of perception and learning. The second object of study was Ruth Benedict, an American anthropologist who had become famous for her work on the influence of culture on individuals. Maslow described these individuals as being self-actualised, and we will explore exactly what he meant by this elsewhere in the chapter. He published a major study of such self-actualised people in 1970, shortly before he died from a heart attack.

potential. They include things like giving love unselfishly; increases in drive, like curiosity and the thirst for knowledge; developing skills and having new experiences. Maslow felt that the personal growth involved in these B-motives was exciting and rewarding for the individuals and served to stimulate them further. This is a crucial difference between deficiency motives and growth motives. Deficiency motives create a negative motivational state that can be changed only by satisfying the need; in contrast, growth motives can be enjoyable, and satisfying these needs can act as further motivation to achieve personal goals and ambitions. In this way, deficiency motives are seen to ensure our survival, while growth needs represent a higher level of functioning that can result in us becoming happier, healthier and more fulfilled as individuals. Maslow suggested that the psychoanalysts had overemphasised drive reduction as a motivator for human behaviour because this tended to be true of the clinical populations that were their focus. He acknowledged that human motives were complex and that behaviour could be motivated by several needs. For example, an apparently simple behaviour like eating might be motivated by hunger, the need to be with others or as the need for emotional comfort when a love affair goes wrong; and we are sure you can think of other motives. If we ate only to fulfil our hunger needs, obesity would not be such a health problem in Western societies.

Hierarchy of needs

Maslow (1970) felt that it would be difficult to produce lists of human needs given the complexity of human motivation and the way that behaviour could be motivated by several needs. However, he argued that needs vary significantly in terms of their importance for ensuring our survival. To this end, he developed what has become his famous hierarchy of needs. Some needs have to be met before other needs are acknowledged and begin to motivate our behaviour. We saw this earlier in the economic depression example. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is displayed in Figure 6.1. It begins with lower-level or survival needs, which have to be satisfied first before we seek gratification of our higher-order needs.

The physiological needs

Our physiological needs include hunger, thirst, sleep, oxygen, the elimination of bodily waste and sex. Most of these are deficiency needs; and once they are satisfied, the motivation to pursue the activity ceases. If we are thirsty we have a drink of water, and the need is satisfied. The exceptions are sexual drive, the need for elimination and sleep; these are considered to be growth needs (Maslow, 1968). Sexual needs, for example, do not decrease with gratification

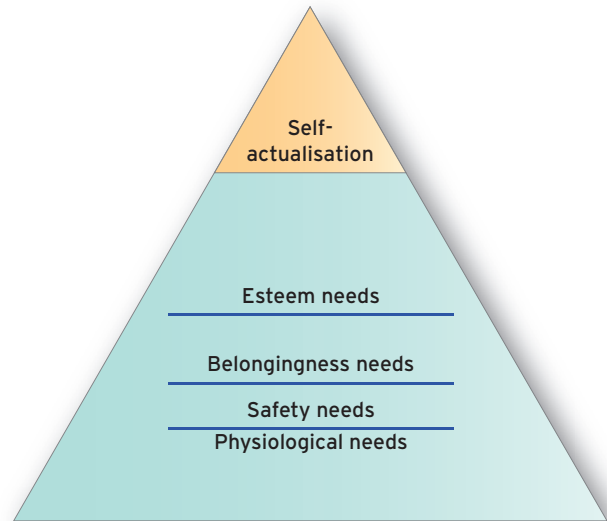


Figure 6.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

but frequently increase. Rarely in Western cultures are individuals in the position of being motivated only by their physiological needs; but we can imagine that if you were starving, food would be your number one priority and all your other needs for respect, love and the like would be of little importance. Once our physiological needs are satisfied, we then turn our attention to the next level of needs as a source of motivation.

The safety needs

Needs at the next level of Maslow's hierarchy include needs for security, safe circumstances to live within, self-protection, law-abiding communities and a sense of order. Although Maslow tended to focus on the positive aspects of these drives, what emerges at this level are your fears and anxieties about your own safety – and these motivate your behaviour. If you live in a large estate where violence and crime are rife, you can imagine being motivated to work either at getting a house in a safer place or at changing the environment to make it safer. Which you would choose is likely to be influenced by other personality factors, such as your levels of altruism and political and situational factors. For others, the choice might be getting securer locks on their doors or altering their behaviour to minimise the risk of being harmed. All of these behaviours Maslow would conceptualise as being motivated by our need for security.

Maslow (1970) pointed out that the safety needs can be clearly observed in infants and young children where they are upset by loud unexplained noises, rough handling or major changes in their daily routine. He strongly believed

that children need routines, consistently enforced rules and limits imposed on their behaviour to meet their safety needs. The absence of this safe, relatively predictable environment would impact badly on a child's development, although Maslow did not specify the specific negative effects likely to occur.

His contention was that we all prefer to live in stable societies, where we feel safe and are not continually at risk of being robbed or mugged or our homes burgled. This may be one of the reasons that in general elections, voters always seem to be interested in issues of law and order. Maslow would say that such prospective voters are being motivated by their safety needs to take an interest in such things. Our safety needs also motivate us to buy insurance and save for a pension or a rainy day, and they may motivate us to train for a secure job where we feel our skills will always be in demand and we are unlikely to be made redundant. Maslow (1968) pointed out that the downside of safety needs is that they can stifle our growth by encouraging us always to opt for the safe choice and thereby minimise risk in our life.

Belongingness and love needs

Once our physiological and safety needs are largely taken care of, Maslow states that our needs for belongingness and love become more important motivators of our behaviour. He is saying that we all need to feel that we are needed and accepted by others. Human beings are conceptualised as social beings, and we need to feel that we are rooted in communities, with ties to family and friends. Our need for belongingness motivates us to make friends, to join clubs and other organisations where we can meet people and socialise. Once our more basic needs have been met, we become more aware of our loneliness, absence of companions and friends, and we become motivated to do something about it. Maslow defined two distinct types of love that were based on different needs, D-love and B-love. The first is **D-love**, which is based on a deficiency need, hence the label. It is the love that we seek to meet the emptiness inside ourselves. We want it for ourselves; the loved one is there to meet our needs. In this way, it is a relatively selfish deficiency need. Maslow defines this love as consisting of individual yearning for affection, tenderness, feelings of elation and sexual arousal. It does not always bring out the best in individuals, as they may display all sorts of manipulative behaviour to try to get the attention of the person they desire. It can sometimes be observed in the young child competing for their mother's attention with their younger sibling. Maslow contrasts this need for love and belongingness for ourselves with the ability we have to love others. He calls this latter type of love **B-love** and suggests that once our basic needs for D-love have been met, we become capable of attaining B-love. B-love or Being-love is about

being able to love others in a non-possessive, unconditional way, simply loving them for being. It involves showing respect for the other, accepting their individuality, putting their needs before your own on occasion and valuing them. B-love is a growth need, and Maslow sees it as representing an emotionally mature type of love. It is possible only when the basic needs have been sufficiently gratified. At this stage, Maslow (1970) considers that the person is moving towards **self-actualisation**. Maslow was concerned about the high numbers of individuals living alone in Western cultures and felt that while this lifestyle is valued by some individuals, for most it creates loneliness as belongingness and love needs may not be met sufficiently.

The esteem needs

Esteem needs are the last of our basic needs. Maslow (1970) divided these into two types of needs. The first type of esteem need is based on our need to see ourselves as competent, achieving individuals. Secondly, there is the need for esteem based on the evaluation of others. He claimed that we have a need for respect and admiration from other people but advises that this must be deserved. He suggests that the incompetent individual who lies, cheats or buys their way into a position of authority will still feel inferior and will not enjoy their position, as their real esteem needs – especially their need to see themselves as competent and achieving – are not being met (Maslow, 1970).

The need for self-actualisation

The highest level of need is for self-actualisation. Maslow (1968, 1970) argues that once our basic needs have been met, we start to focus on what we want from life. Individuals may be very successful financially and have enough power and success that all their lower-level needs are being met, but they may still not be happy and contented. They are still searching for something. This restlessness comes from their need for self-actualisation. Self-actualisation demands that individuals develop themselves so that they achieve their full potential. It is about maximising their talents and finding meaning in life, so that they are at peace with themselves. Maslow is eager to stress that this process will be different for everyone depending on the individual's talents and interests. It is a growth need that emerges only after the other basic needs have been addressed. For this reason, Maslow (1968, 1970) describes it as coming to prominence only in older people. This idea is similar to Jung's concept of individuation that we discussed in Chapter 3. Young adults are seen as being taken up with addressing their basic needs, such as getting an education and finding work, somewhere to live, love and relationships. Maslow (1964) is clear that not all individuals achieve self-actualisation, although many strive to do so. Self-actualised

individuals are thought to be rare. He suggests that the model of motivation we have just described does not fit these self-actualised individuals. He suggests that the needs of self-actualisers are qualitatively different; he describes them as **metaneeds**. The foci of metaneeds are very different, being concerned with higher aesthetic and moral values such as beauty, truth, justice and ethics. We shall be looking in some more detail shortly at the qualities of self-actualised individuals after we have concluded the discussion of Maslow's model of motivation.

Discussion of basic needs

Maslow's model appears very neat and simple at one level, but he stressed that his hierarchical model is an oversimplification of the actual relationship between needs and behaviour. The reality is that while the order makes sense for most people, there will be individual exceptions. The priority of our needs will vary depending on our personal circumstances across time, so that it is not a static model. At any level, a need does not have to be totally gratified in order for us to be motivated by higher-order needs. Maslow estimated some average figures for need fulfilment in the average American, suggesting that on average around 85 per cent of individual physical needs are met, 70 per cent of safety needs, 50 per cent of belongingness and love, 40 per cent of self-esteem needs and 10 per cent of self-actualisation needs. Thinking about percentage need in this way helps to get across Maslow's idea that the degree to which a need is unfulfilled will influence the impact it has on the individual's behaviour. For example, if a long-term relationship ends, the belongingness and love needs are likely to be much less satisfied than they were previously. This results in the individual becoming more motivated to seek solace with others, and the person will derive some comfort from being with friends and other relatives as this helps increase their sense of belonging.

Maslow (1968, 1970) claimed that his model had universal applicability, but that the means of gratification might change within cultures. He felt that many of the basic needs, such as physiological and safety needs, we share with other animals, but the higher-order needs are distinctly human. The higher apes display a need for love and belongingness, but Maslow felt that self-actualisation is a uniquely human pursuit.

He stressed that the motivation for behaviour is frequently immensely complex and that many behaviours are motivated by a variety of needs. Using the example of sexual behaviour, Maslow pointed out that it can be motivated by a physiological need for sexual release, or it can be a need for love and affection, a wish to feel masculine or feminine or to express a sense of mastery in a situation and so on. Thus, the activities we engage in may also satisfy more

than one set of needs at any one time. Maslow (1970) also acknowledges the importance of unconscious motivation. He perceives the instinctoid tendencies as being quite weak and easily overcome by situational factors, and consequently we may often not be consciously aware of how they affect our motivation. However, unlike Freud, who claims that unconscious motives originating in our past experiences cause our behaviour and also determine our goals, Maslow sees human beings as being future oriented. For Maslow, our ultimate goal is self-actualisation driven on by our motivational needs. It is the instinctoid needs that he conceptualises as frequently influencing us unconsciously. There is some inconsistency in Maslow's theorising here as he also accepts the validity of the Freudian defence mechanisms (see Chapter 2). He accepted that they play a crucial role in preventing individuals knowing themselves and yet the individual is unconscious of their effect. So, here we have further evidence of unconscious motivation based on past experiences influencing behaviour. In Maslow's defence, he wanted his focus to be on healthy individuals. He was clear that the psychologically healthy individual needs to use defence mechanisms much less, and therefore the role of unconscious motivation based on past experiences is also less.

Characteristics of self-actualisers

Maslow wanted his theory to be about human aspirations and abilities. He did not want to focus on clinical populations and their psychopathology, as is the case with so many other personality theories. To meet this aim, he undertook interview studies of individuals who appeared to him to be self-actualised; he also conducted studies of famous historical figures, using any documents about them that he could find. Among those he studied were Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, William James, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Schweitzer, Jane Addams and Baruch Spinoza (Maslow, 1968). He described this research as undertaking a holistic analysis, the aim of which was to understand individuals in some depth. From this study, he outlined the characteristics of self-actualising individuals. At the outset we need to acknowledge, as Maslow (1970) did, that this data was impressionistic and did not meet conventional scientific standards in terms of reliability and validity. However, Maslow published these studies as he felt that the topic was so important.

Every healthy person studied was described by Maslow as being creative. The creativity of the self-actualised was a way of approaching life. It did not necessarily mean that they painted pictures or produced poetry and so on, which is how we tend to think conventionally about creativity. Rather, they approached everyday tasks in novel ways. They might be a conventionally creative person as well, but an

example he gave was of a woman who expressed her creativity in producing very interesting meals and presenting them beautifully in quite novel ways. Self-actualisers found little everyday things interesting, and Maslow compares them with young children who take such pleasure from small discoveries. Self-actualisers have not lost their awe of the world and their interest in the minutiae.

Self-actualisers also think differently, according to Maslow (1962). He claimed that self-actualisers engage more often in what he termed **being cognition (B-cognition)**. This is a non-judgemental form of thought. It is about accepting oneself and the world and just being and feeling at one with the world. Maslow referred to B-cognition occurring at moments of experiencing self-actualisation in what he termed **peak experiences**; and obviously, self-actualisers have more of these peak experiences. More recently, Csikszentmihalyi (1999) has defined this concept of peak experiences in some detail, although he has renamed them optimal experiences. The characteristics that Csikszentmihalyi describes as defining such experiences are summarised in Table 6.1. This list will give you a much better understanding of Maslow's concept of peak experience.

B-cognition is contrasted with the more normally occurring **deficiency cognition (D-cognition)**. D-cognition is judgemental, and in it we see ourselves as distinct from the world around us. It is about making judgements about how well our experiences are meeting our deficiency needs. Maslow (1962) stresses that B-cognition states are transient even for self-actualisers. He points out that it is dangerous to exist continually in a passive, non-judgemental, non-intervening state.

In terms of their personal characteristics, self-actualisers tend to have higher levels of self-acceptance. They also accept others more easily, being less judgemental and more tolerant of others. Maslow also claimed that they perceive reality more accurately with fewer distortions. This is linked to them being more in touch with themselves and being less psychologically defended. The use of a defence mechanism

tends to distort reality. For example, if you failed to get a job you really wanted, the defended individual might say that the process was unfair, or deny that they wanted the job, while the self-actualiser is more likely to be truthful.

Self-actualisers tend to have well-developed ethical and moral standards and are more likely to accept responsibility for their actions. They have greater self-knowledge and tend to follow their codes of ethics. They also have a strong wish to help others and are concerned about the welfare of the communities they live in. This quality is the same as Adler's concept of social interest that we discussed in Chapter 3, and Maslow acknowledges a debt to Adler for this concept. Self-actualisers are good at focusing on problems and seeing them through to resolution. They are often more interested in the big picture than the minor details. In their working lives, they are more likely to be motivated by a desire to fulfil their inner potential than by promises of more wealth or other trappings of success. They do things because they want to rather than it being a way to get on at work. In this way, they are more independent and less influenced by cultural norms and much more likely to make up their own minds about issues and act accordingly.

In their personalities, self-actualisers tend to have deeper personal relationships, preferring to have a few close friends rather than a wide circle of acquaintances. Maslow also claimed that they are more likely to demonstrate the non-possessive B-love. Their sense of humour is also different. They find jokes based on superiority or aggressive hostility offensive and prefer more philosophically based humour.

Maslow's description of self-actualising individuals makes them sound like absolute paragons of virtue. However, as Maslow (1968, 1970) points out, this is far from the case. No one is a self-actualising individual all the time in all their activities. Similarly, peak experiences come and go. At times, self-actualising individuals can be as annoying and irritating as anyone. Like Albert Ellis, as we saw in Chapter 5, Maslow strongly believed that there are no perfect human beings, but some are happier than others are.

Table 6.1 The characteristics of peak experiences.

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- 1 The individual's attention is totally absorbed by the activity.
 - 2 The activity has clear objectives so that the person has a clear goal to work towards.
 - 3 It is a challenging activity that requires the person's full attention but is not so difficult that they cannot make meaningful progress.
 - 4 The person is able to concentrate fully on the task at hand, and other parts of their life do not impinge on what they are doing.
 - 5 The individual feels in control of the activity.
 - 6 The activity is so personally engrossing that the individual does not think about themselves while engaging in it.
 - 7 All sense of time is lost while the person is engaged. Most commonly, time passes very quickly.
 - 8 The activity tends to be one where feedback is clearly available, so that the person is aware of making progress even though it may be based on only a personal evaluation.
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Personality development

Maslow did not provide a great deal of detailed information about personality development; rather, he outlined some core principles. Firstly, he conceptualised children as having an innate drive to develop. This is a positive drive fuelled by the motivational needs outlined in his hierarchy of needs. Maslow felt that as children become socialised, there is a crucial time for their development. This is when they decide whether they are going to listen to what he terms 'their inner voice' and develop according to their own instinctoid needs or whether they are going to follow their parental dictates. Maslow concluded that parental expectations and cultural expectations influence most children, but this is because children are seldom given real choices. If you cast your mind back to the material you read about Summerhill School in the introduction to this chapter, Summerhill exemplifies the sort of learning experience that Maslow felt was the ideal for creating happy, fulfilled individuals. Children are not coerced but given choices, and Maslow assumed that their natural desire to grow will direct them towards engaging in learning experiences. This is the reported Summerhill experience. There are rules – indeed, quite a large number of them – but they are formulated with the pupils and enforced by the whole community. Maslow is clear that children need rules and limits to meet their safety needs. Like Adler, he felt that pampering is very bad for children and that having some rules to come up against is beneficial. Children need to be given considerable

freedom choice but they also need to be given responsibilities. In this way, they are encouraged to always take responsibility for their behaviour. The satisfaction of a child's needs, as specified in Maslow's hierarchy, is the best way to encourage healthy development – as long as this is done in a disciplined way, and the child is not pampered.

Mental illness and its treatment in Maslow's approach

For Maslow (1970) there was one underlying cause for all mental illness and psychological disturbance, and that was the failure to satisfy the individual's fundamental needs as outlined in the hierarchy. He felt the lower the level of need that is not being satisfied, the more profound the disturbance. For example, someone who has failed to find any place in the world and in relationships that makes them feel safe is more disturbed than someone who is still searching for love and respect. In this conceptualisation, it is clear that the basic needs have a psychological aspect to them and are not merely physical needs. Safety is not just about a safe environment, although it is part of it. If you feel unsafe where you live, you are more likely to be anxious, and it will impact your psychological health. Similarly, if you do not have any family or close relationships that you feel secure in, you are going to be very anxious and upset as your needs are not being met.

In terms of treatment, Maslow adopted an eclectic approach. He was against all diagnostic labels and the medical



Rogers believed that we are the best experts on ourselves and that people are capable of working out their own solutions to their own problems.

Source: Pearson Education Ltd. Jules Selmes

model that they implied. To improve their health, individuals needed to be assisted towards self-actualisation. Maslow was a trained psychoanalyst, and he used psychoanalysis on occasion for severe problems following the method described in Chapter 2. For less disturbed individuals, he would use briefer therapies including behaviour therapy. He was also a fan of group therapy and encounter groups for healthy individuals to help them to self-actualise further. We will discuss encounter groups in more detail later in the chapter, when we look at the work of Carl Rogers. Thus Maslow is seen as adopting an eclectic approach to therapy – even utilising psychoanalysis, which is somewhat at odds with his rejection of the medical model and his conceptualisation of the causes of psychological disturbance. This inconsistency did not appear to concern him.

Evaluation of Maslow's theory

We will now evaluate Maslow's theory using the eight criteria we identified in Chapter 1: description, explanation, empirical validity, testable concepts, comprehensiveness, parsimony, heuristic value and applied value.

Description

Maslow provides a reasonable, if somewhat simplified, description of human behaviour. The theory therefore is high on face validity. However, he does present an extremely positive and almost simplistic view of human nature and human beings. This is somewhat at odds with his acceptance of many Freudian defence mechanisms, as we have discussed earlier in this chapter. Defence mechanisms, as we saw in Chapter 2, refer to the complexity of human motivation and the difficulties in explaining behaviour even to ourselves. Maslow does not acknowledge these inconsistencies in his theorising.

It seems somewhat simplistic to claim that blocks to self-actualisation are at the roots of all human behavioural problems. There is no mention of genetic susceptibilities to mental illness and sociopathic conditions, for example. To put so much emphasis on environmental influences is untenable, as you will see from the biological evidence reviewed in Chapters 8 and 9.

Explanation

While Maslow's theory appears to present a neat, rational explanation of human motivation, it does appear to suggest that motivation is more clear-cut than it generally is, and that the link between our needs and our behaviour is obvious. The reality is that behaviour is frequently the result of many different motivators. For example, if you take the case of someone doing a menial job that is poorly paid,

the assumption from Maslow is that they are working to earn money to meet their physiological and safety needs. The job itself is not inherently satisfying; but they may work with a good set of colleagues, and this may meet their belongingness needs and compensate for the nature of the work, so they are not motivated to seek more conducive or better paid work. An example of this might be where a member of a company cleaning staff shows a marked reluctance to become a supervisor even though it paid more. Though the job might bring extra money and be physically easier, they might not consider this compensation for the loss of comradeship from the other cleaners. Maslow has provided useful insights into human motivational needs, but perhaps not the whole picture.

Maslow's work on defining types of needs and types of love is interesting. It was a new, very creative approach to these topics. In his work on general needs and types of love, he presents a less positive perspective on human beings, seeing us as capable of being manipulative, disrespectful of others and very demanding in the way that we treat others. This is somewhat at odds with his generally positive view of human beings, but he does not really acknowledge these inconsistencies in his theory.

Empirical validity

While self-actualisation is at the core of Maslow's theory, the research on which it is based is dubious. He selected a very small sample of participants to investigate the concept. These were not randomly selected; rather, Maslow chose to examine individuals whom he believed to be self-actualisers. He did not use any objective measures to assess these individuals, and there was a lack of consistency in assessment between individuals. In all, it was an extremely subjective process, more descriptive than evaluative.

Testable concepts

Many of Maslow's other concepts are also difficult to define precisely and therefore difficult to test empirically. Examples include peak experiences where it is unclear exactly what is meant. Self-actualisers are thought to be rare individuals, yet researchers such as Leiby (1997) report that drug-induced peak experiences are common. This raises the issue of whether and how these artificially induced experiences relate to self-actualisation. Ravizza (1977) reported that many athletes report peak experiences but are not self-actualisers in any other aspects of their lives. Thus, questions are raised about the relationship between peak experiences and self-actualisation.

The basis for Maslow's selection of the five basic needs is also unclear. He does not provide a rationale for their selection, and many other human needs can be identified. His theorising embraces many assumptions about human

behaviour that are stated authoritatively, but the supporting evidence is either absent or weak. He did argue against the empiricism of existing psychological methodologies, but this does not excuse his lack of attention to providing objective support for this theory (Maslow, 1970).

Most of the concepts in Maslow's theory are imprecisely defined, so they are difficult to research. There have been more systematic attempts to measure self-actualisation. Shostrom (1966) developed a measure called the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI). It is a self-report questionnaire with 150 items that are answered positively or negatively. It measures the degree to which individuals are inner directed on one major scale and whether they use their time effectively on the second major scale, both of which are thought to relate to self-actualisation as we have seen. There are 10 subscales measuring self-actualising values, feeling reactivity, existentiality, self-regard, spontaneity, self-acceptance, nature of humankind, synergy, acceptance of aggression and capacity for intimate contact. While the validity and the usefulness of the measure was established using several samples (Dosamantes-Alperon and Merrill, 1980; Knapp, 1976), there are problems with it. Participants do not like the forced-choice response mode, feeling that it does not give an accurate reflection of their views, and other researchers have reported that it correlates poorly with other related measures such as the Purpose in Life Test (PIL) devised by Crumbaugh and Maholick (1969). Mittleman (1991) reviews much of this work on self-actualisation and concludes that self-actualisation is difficult to measure, but the most reliable aspect of it relates only to possessing openness to experience.

Comprehensiveness

Maslow's theory is really focused on positive growth, and as such it is not a comprehensive theory. His approach was new and creative, making a welcome change to the previous theories with their emphasis on psychopathology. He did attempt some discussion of psychopathology and adopted aspects of Freud's model, but this was not done in a systematic or comprehensive fashion. The explanation of human motivation is also limited. There is much more emphasis on self-actualisation, but even here the precise detail is missing. Maslow does not spell out exactly how self-actualisation can be achieved. Similarly, he talks only in very general terms about the development of personality.

Parsimony

Maslow's theory is very concise for a theory of human personality. We have already discussed how his concept of motivation is limited and how the selection of five basic needs is somewhat arbitrary. The description of personality

development is lacking in detail. We have already discussed the limitations of Maslow's treatment of psychopathology and how the adoption of Freudian concepts such as defence mechanisms is inconsistent with the rest of his theory. As a general theory, the conclusion must be that it is too parsimonious.

Heuristic value

Although Maslow's theory has many limitations, it undoubtedly has had a major impact on many researchers, both in psychology and other disciplines. He was one of the first theorists to focus on the healthy side of human psychological development. His focus on human achievement and human values introduced new foci for psychologists. By vehemently questioning the dominant laboratory study approach to psychology, he caused psychologists to review their research methodologies (Maslow, 1970). He stressed the need to ask meaningful questions rather than pursue more trivial research that could easily be addressed by the existing laboratory-based practices. He wanted researchers to think creatively about developing methodologies that could address important real-life issues, although it might mean losing some control of the laboratory-based studies. He also influenced subsequent theorists such as Rogers, as we shall see.

Applied value

The area where Maslow's work has had most impact is in business. His theory of motivation became and is still popular with managers. It led to an increasing emphasis on the need to offer development opportunities to employees. Maslow stressed the importance of consulting with employees and fostering a sense of belonging within companies, and this concept has been embraced by generations of business managers (Maslow, 1967). His influence also extended to counselling and healthcare professional training, as it provided a neat system for examining human motivational needs. Maslow's work also had a major impact on educational programmes. He emphasised the importance of student-centred learning, suggesting that individuals want to learn and that the role of educators is to provide the environment to facilitate such learning. As discussed in the introduction, he saw schools like Summerhill as offering this learning environment.

Carl Rogers and person-centred therapy

In our review of Carl Rogers' theory, we are going to first outline the basic principles underlying the theory.

Basic principles underlying the theory

Carl Rogers, like most of the personality theorists we have studied, based his theory on disturbed clinical populations. His initial work was based mainly on his experience of working with disturbed adolescents, as detailed in the Profile box on page 138. Many of the therapists that Rogers worked with initially at the American equivalent of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) were psychoanalytically trained, but he increasingly felt uncomfortable working psychoanalytically. His personality theory grew out of his theory of therapy. He acknowledged that experience plays an important part in personality development, but he could not accept the Freudian notion that the early years largely dictate adult development. He felt that individuals can play an active role in shaping their own lives. He, like Maslow, saw human beings as being future oriented and believed that our future goals influence our current behaviour. In this way, he saw individuals as having the power to shape their own lives.

This focus on the power of the individual to change their lives is reflected in the title of his approach. He first named it client-centred therapy. The term ‘patient’ was the norm at the time among therapists and is very much associated with the medical model of illness where the doctor/therapist is the expert who provides treatment and hopefully a cure to the patient. In this relationship, the therapist is the expert and the patient is less powerful and receives the expert’s knowledge. Therefore the medical model has traditionally assigned a relatively passive role to the patient. Adopting an existential humanistic stance, as we discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Rogers (1951) felt that individuals are the best experts on themselves, not the therapist. He selected the term ‘client’ to suggest a more equal role, similar to that of customer and provider. The term ‘client-centred’ reflects Rogers’ view that clients are the experts on themselves and that the role of the therapist is to help the client to better recognise their problems and formulate their issues. In this way, the therapist acts more as a facilitator. Once clients understood what the problem was, Rogers felt that they would know how to solve it in a way that suited their particular life situation. Later he changed the term to ‘person-centred’, feeling that the term ‘person’ is more power neutral than the word ‘client’ is.

Rogers adopted a phenomenological position about the nature of reality. He stressed that we all function within a perceptual or subjective frame of reference (Rogers, 1956). He denied the possibility of an objective reality that we all share. Instead, we all perceive our own reality. Sometimes students have a problem with this idea, as you may be having. However, if you think about the unreliability of eyewitness testimony, something that social psychologists have spent some time studying (Kassin, Ellsworth and Smith,

1989; Loftus, 1979), the meaning will become clearer. We know that even in experimental situations, there are significant individual differences in terms of the interpretation of events and the details seen by different observers. Rogers points out that how we perceive a situation depends on our mood, the type of person we are, our beliefs, our past experiences and so on. We discussed this in some detail in Chapter 5 when we explored the ABC model, used in Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy, to conceptualise our perceptual processes. Rogers, like Ellis, accepts that everyone perceives situations differently; therefore, to understand an individual, you have to try to understand how they see the world. We will return to this later when we discuss Rogers’ approach to counselling and therapy.

Self-actualisation

Rogers (1961) stressed the uniqueness of each individual. He felt that clients are the best experts on themselves and that people are capable of working out their own solutions to their own problems. He believed that each person has a natural tendency towards growth and self-actualisation. His definition of **self-actualisation** is the same as Maslow’s that we discussed earlier: it is an innate, positive drive to develop and realise our potential. Individuals are described as having an innate actualising tendency. It is our single basic motivating drive, and it is a positive drive towards growth. From birth, Rogers suggested we all have a drive towards actualising our potential, to become what we are capable of becoming.

Rogers (1959, 1977) claimed we can all cope with our lives and remain psychologically healthy as long as our actualising potential is not blocked. Blocks in our actualising tendency are the cause of all psychological problems. This role for the actualising tendency differs from Maslow’s conception. You will recall that for Maslow, psychological problems result from an individual’s needs not being met, and he is specific about these needs. The role Rogers ascribed to self-actualisation is less specific. It is a general positive motivator, indeed our only motivator. There are two aspects to it. The biological aspect includes the *drive for satisfaction* of our basic needs such as food, water, sleep, safety and sexual reproduction. The psychological aspect involves the development of our potential and the qualities that make us more worthwhile human beings (Rogers, 1959). Rogers paid most attention to the psychological aspect, self-actualisation, as he conceptualised it as being crucial for our psychological health. It is a positive drive towards growth for Rogers, just as it was for Maslow. Rogers (1977) suggested that we develop our capacity for self-destructive, aggressive, and harmful behaviour only under perverse circumstances, such as growing up in a difficult environment with few opportunities for self-actualisation or not

Profile



Carl Rogers

Carl Ransom Rogers was born in 1902 into a very religious family in Oak Park, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago in the United States. He was the fourth child of six and described his upbringing as warm and caring although the family adhered to very strict religious principles, where the work ethic and taking responsibility for your actions were stressed. His father was a successful civil engineer who also owned a farm. As a child, Rogers was encouraged to breed animals on the farm, and he reported that studying how to do this effectively introduced him to the world of science and scientific method and later influenced his approach to psychology. Rogers first set out to study agriculture, but after graduating from agricultural college, he enrolled in a seminary to study religion. He became somewhat disillusioned with the religious course in the seminary and enrolled instead at Columbia University Teacher's College to study psychology as he had previously studied some psychology and enjoyed it. While still a student, he married his childhood sweetheart and had to take a job to support his family before he had completed his doctoral studies. He then spent 12 years working for the American equivalent of the

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPPC) dealing with very disturbed children. During that time, he published a book entitled *Measuring Personality Adjustment in Children* in 1931, followed by *The Clinical Treatment of the Problem Child* in 1939. It was while working with disturbed children that Rogers developed his approach to personality and his unique approach to treatment, client-centred therapy. Following the publication of his books, he obtained a professorship at Ohio State University in the psychology department. The next year, 1940, he first outlined his full theory of client-centred therapy at a conference in Minnesota. He went on to work at several other American universities, setting up counselling centres, before finally setting up his own Centre for the Study of the Person in La Jolla, California. Rogers was a productive writer, producing 16 books and over 200 journal articles. He died of a heart attack at age 85. His books continue to be published; several were reissued with new introductions by Rogerian scholars, all attesting to the popularity of the man and the lasting contribution he has made to psychology.

being given the freedom to develop according to our true nature. In these circumstances, our self-actualisation is blocked and problems occur. Individuals may become psychologically distressed and/or demonstrate antisocial behaviour.

Effect of society on self-actualisation

To understand fully the process of self-actualisation, we need to examine Rogers' conception of the self. Rogers made a distinction between our real self and our self-concept (see Figure 6.2). The real self is defined as being our underlying organismic self. This is, if you like, the genetic blueprint for the person we are capable of becoming if our development occurs within totally favourable circumstances. If we had these ideal developmental experiences,

Rogers suggested, our behavioural choices would be guided purely by our actualising tendency. Self-actualisation would then be within everyone's reach once you had lived long enough to accrue sufficient life experiences to discover what truly made you fulfilled. However, Rogers argued that this is rarely if ever the case. The explanation for this is quite complex, and we will go through it in stages.

He asserted that human beings as a species are social animals. We all need to be liked/loved by other people. Rogers was very clear about the nature of the emotional experience that is necessary for optimum development, and he termed it **unconditional positive regard**. He preferred this to the term 'love' as he asserted that love is seldom truly unconditional. Unconditional positive regard means accepting someone for who they are and valuing them just for being. The term 'regard' means seeing oneself as making a positive difference in someone else's life. It is about knowing that someone would truly miss you were you to die tomorrow. They would feel that they had a gap in their life that would always be there. It is an unselfish love, like Maslow's Belonging-love (B-love). You want what is best for the other above what is best for you. However, Rogers suggested that unconditional positive regard is rare and that mostly what we experience is conditional positive regard. As part of the socialisation process, we learn that we

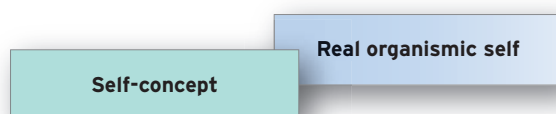


Figure 6.2 Rogers' two aspects of the self.

are loved/liked more when we do what others want us to do. When we behave in ways that please our parents, for example, they reward us with praise and this makes us feel good. We have obtained positive regard from them. For the most part, the positive regard we experience is not unconditional. When we misbehave, or fail an examination or refuse to do something that our parents desperately want us to do, we are likely to have experienced a sense of having disappointed our parents and being less loved and loveable as a result. These experiences help us to learn what we need to do in order to get positive regard from other people.

Even more crucially, we develop what Rogers called **conditions of worth** related to these experiences. We learn that we are loved more when we do things that make our parents or other people in our social world happy. This need for positive regard leads to us acquiring conditions of worth, which we use to evaluate the impact that our behaviour is likely to have on others. What is important about conditions of worth is that they can distort the natural direction of our actualising tendency. For example, if one of my conditions of worth is that I am loved more when I am helpful and agree to do things that my friends want, I am going to find it difficult to say no to these friends when they ask for my help. I may well find myself doing lots of things that I do not really want to do. This is often the case with individuals who lack assertiveness, for example. They always agree to do things for others because their condition of worth dictates that by doing so, they will be liked and that conversely, if they refuse, they will be disliked. Conditions of worth are important as they can keep us doing things that do not meet our real needs, and this makes it difficult for us ever to achieve self-actualisation.

We began this section by referring to two aspects of the self: the real organismic self and the self-concept. Conditions of worth, as we shall now see, impact on our self-concept. As children grow and become socialised, they develop a sense of who they are as people. Rogers termed this their **self-concept**. It is our perception of who we are based largely on how other people have described us and evaluated us. You may have been told in your family that you are the clever one or the good-looking one, and you will have internalised this description as part of who you are. The easiest way to access your self-concept is to answer the question, 'Who am I?' Most of us find it relatively easy to produce a list of adjectives to describe ourselves, and this is our self-concept. We use the conditions of worth that we have acquired as our self-concept has developed, to evaluate our own behaviour and to help us make choices in our lives. We are conscious of the contents of our self-concept, whereas our real organismic self may have become obscured as a result of our developmental experiences of socialisation. As we saw in our discussion of conditions of worth, we may end up making choices that make other people happy but do not meet the needs of our real self. In

the longer term, we are unlikely to be able to self-actualise; if this is the case, we will experience feelings of being discontented at least and perhaps even psychological illnesses such as depression.

The conditions of worth linked to our self-concept can be problematic as they keep us doing things that do not meet our real needs. We also tend to perceive things so that they fit our self-concept. For example, suppose you do not think you are a very able student and then, in an assignment, you get an A-grade. You are unlikely to say, 'I did that piece of work well and I deserved that mark'. Instead, you are more likely to explain your mark to your friends by saying that you were lucky or that the instructor was a soft marker and so on. This is because getting an A-grade does not fit with your concept of yourself as a poor student academically. In this way, our self-concept can serve to lower our own levels of self-regard.

You may ask, why do we maintain a self-concept if aspects of it are ineffective? There are several reasons, as follows. Firstly, we use it and our related conditions of worth to judge our own personal adequacy. This is potentially problematic, as our self-concept will contain conditions of worth that were applicable to us at an earlier age. These conditions of worth are very deeply embedded and therefore more resistant to change. As you will know from learning theory, knowledge that we acquire early is more resistant to change. Say, for example, you met an eminent businessman, who from a modest start had become wealthy and successful. All the evidence is that he is an able man and obviously very bright to have achieved all that he had achieved. On learning that you were at university, he comments that he has always been 'thick'. He tells you that he failed the grammar school entrance examination and was always useless at learning. He goes on to say that this was a great disappointment to his parents. Obviously, he had learnt a great deal to be as successful as he was, but still he judged himself according to a condition of worth he had acquired as a child. Rogers felt that conditions of worth have the effect of lowering our sense of worth and make it less likely that we will have the confidence to attempt change. If we believe that we are uncoordinated, for example, then we are unlikely to enrol for a dancing class or take up gymnastics. In these ways, our self-concept and conditions of worth are important; they dictate the way in which we interact with people to meet our own needs, and they influence the choices we make in our lives.

Thus we can see that our self-concept is socially constructed. To summarise, we tend to judge ourselves according to what others think of us rather than on what we ourselves feel. We behave this way because of our high need for positive regard. This may result in us relying more on other people's judgements about our personal worth than on our own views. Rogers (1959) suggested

that because of our high need for positive regard, our organismic valuing processes may be overwhelmed. We are out of touch with our real needs. Only if we are raised with sufficient unconditional positive regard is there likely to be congruence between the self and the self-concept, and the better the match between the two, the more psychologically healthy we will be as adults. Rogers believed that parents and educational establishments can create helpful environments. These are environments that foster creativity, with democratic rules that enable us to be curious, self-reliant and respectful of others and ourselves within safe limits. This is very much the environment that is provided at Summerhill, the school we discussed in the introduction. Harrington, Block and Block (1987) used data from a longitudinal study, set up by Block and Block in 1968 at the University of California, to show that children raised in such environments were more creative in later life than were children in a matched control group that did not experience a creative environment. This is a major study documenting around 100 young people from age three. The longitudinal study is still ongoing, with the participants all in their thirties now. We have included the web address at the end of the chapter for anyone wanting to know more about this research.

Developmental impact on the child of their parent’s self-concept

For Rogers, one important way that parents impacted on their children related to the adequacy of the parents’ self-concepts. In his model, the healthy individual has experienced significant amounts of unconditional positive regard and consequently has relatively few conditions of worth. Here two points are worth noting. Firstly, Rogers did not specify precisely how much unconditional positive regard qualifies as a significant amount. He is always very vague about this, but the assumption is that none of us get enough. Secondly, as a consequence, we all have some conditions of worth. Individuals with fewer conditions of worth are classified as high-functioning adults, while those with more conditions of worth are classified as low functioning. High-functioning adults are more accepting of themselves and of others and therefore impose fewer conditions of worth on their children, for example. Low-functioning individuals have many more conditions of worth, are consequently less accepting and more judgemental, and impose more conditions of worth on their children. The ways that the adequacy of parents’ self-concept affects how they relate to their own children are summarised in Figure 6.3.

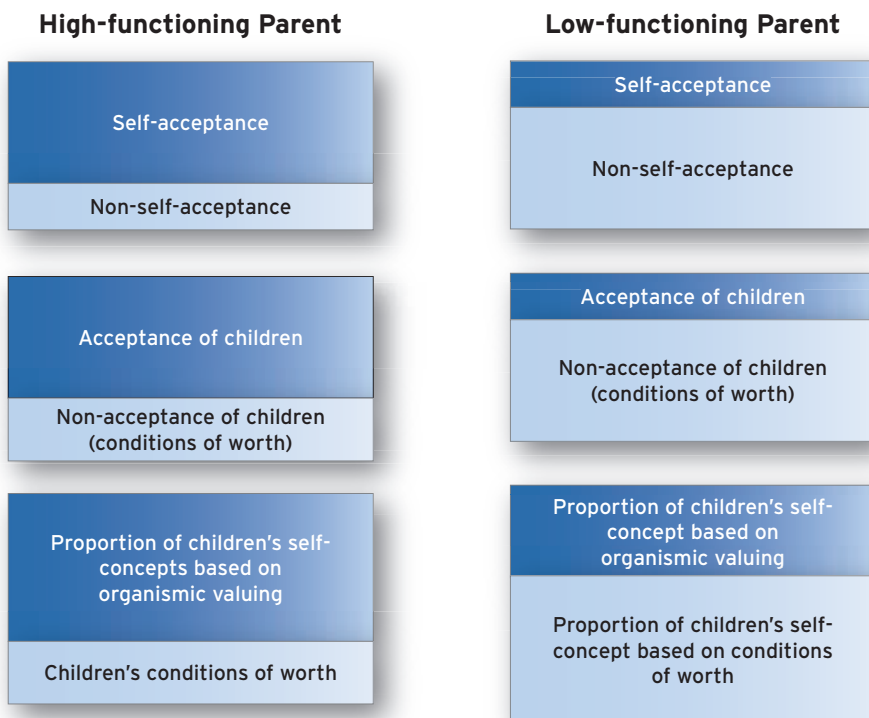


Figure 6.3 Degree of self-acceptance of parents in relation to their acceptance of their children, and the extent of conditions of worth imposed on their children.

From this discussion, you can see that having conditions of worth makes us judgemental of both others and ourselves. Being self-accepting means that you are less judgemental of yourself and others. In psychological terms, self-accepting individuals are less psychologically defended, so that Rogers claimed they perceive the world more accurately and have less need to distort situations to fit with their self-concept. Take the example of someone who is interviewed for a job that they really want. Although they prepared well and thought that they performed well at interview, they did not get the job. In Rogers' view, the self-accepting person will accept that they were not right for the position in some way. On the other hand, the individual with low self-acceptance will defend their self-esteem by asserting that they really did not want the job and had only applied for the experience of being interviewed or something similar. This exemplifies what Rogers meant by distorting their perception of reality.

Rogers was keen that his ideas were tested, and Wylie (1979) and Swann (1984) found some support among students for this idea, although it is not completely clear how well the measures they used actually assessed perceptual distortions. They asked individuals to report how they would react to various scenarios involving failure and then asked a friend of the participant to assess how honest they thought the person's judgement was. Perceptual distortions of this type are notoriously difficult to measure. You may also recall from our discussion of Freudian defence mechanisms in Chapter 2 that Freud suggested that distorting our perception so that we rationalise our failures is a psychologically adaptive response, as it serves to protect our self-esteem. It is problematic only if it is taken to extreme in the Freudian model.

Given Rogers' emphasis on the importance of the subjective worldview, it is quite strange to find him discussing individual perceptual distortions of reality. His emphasis in therapy, as we shall see, was to accept the individual's perceptions – distorted or otherwise. The point he made was that the healthy individual has fewer distortions, and they are more accepting of themselves. In the course of therapy, Rogers would expect perceptual distortions to decrease as the individual became more in touch with their organismic values that can lead to self-actualisation. We will return to this in more detail when we discuss Rogers' approach to therapy.

The role of the actualising tendency in development

From infancy, Rogers claimed, we interact with the world in terms of our self-actualising tendency. Towards this end, infants are seen as engaging in an **organismic valuing** process. This is defined as an innate bodily process for

evaluating which experiences are 'right' or 'wrong' for the person. Infants will value food when hungry and reject it when full. Rogers (1959) and Rogers and Stevens (1967) went further and suggested that infants 'know' instinctively which foods are good for them and which are bad. As evidence, Rogers quoted a study by Davis (1928). Davis studied three infants aged between 8 and 10 months. Two of the babies were on a particular diet for six months, and one was on it for a year. Nurses interpreted the babies pointing to various foods, and the babies were given this food. All the babies remained healthy, and Rogers quoted this study as supporting his hypothesis that even babies know what is good for them. However, examination of the choices of food available showed that all the food choices were healthy. It would not have been ethical to present infants with a totally unhealthy diet. There is now well-established evidence showing that babies prefer sweet substances to nutritious substances (Lipsitt, 1977). In Lipsitt's study, infants under four months were shown to suck longer and to have shorter pauses between sucking when fed sugar-and-water solutions than they did when fed nutritious, non-sweet solutions. This finding lends no support to Rogers' notion that human beings instinctively always know what is good for them. Rogers (1980) admitted that the valuing process is more complex than he initially envisaged; but he still insisted that if adults are to grow constructively, they must trust their own bodies and their own intuitions. The idea is that our sole motivator is the drive for self-actualisation. We may lose sight of our real needs due to our need to please others and meet our conditions of worth.

For Rogers (1961), as we have seen, parents play a significant role in determining how in touch the child ultimately is with their self-actualising tendency. To maximise the chances of self-actualisation, the child needs to grow up with relatively few conditions of worth. Rogers (1977) saw schools and the wider society as having a crucial role to play here also, as we have seen (Rogers, 1951, 1969, 1983; Rogers and Freiberg, 1993). He advocated student-centred teaching, where the role of the educational establishment is to provide the conditions that facilitate the child's learning. As we have previously discussed, educational establishments such as Summerhill meet Rogers' principles. These schools do not encourage competition and are relatively non-judgemental. The rules that are enforced are democratically agreed ones that ensure the children are in a safe, humane environment. Rogers felt that if conditions of trust develop, it is easier for individuals to work towards self-actualisation guided by their actualising tendency (Rogers and Freiberg, 1993). In a trusting, non-judgemental environment, it is easier for children to evaluate their experiences and have the confidence to select those that they enjoy and find worthwhile. Rogers stated that such children will be more in touch with their true selves and as such will instinctively know which experiences are good for them.

Traditional schooling, in Rogers' view, encouraged the development of conditions of worth in the child and stifled creativity. Children need to be respected and to have freedom to make choices in their lives. This freedom also brings with it responsibilities, and Rogers suggested that children must also respect others and acknowledge that others too have the right to make their own decisions. This position is very similar to the rights and responsibilities that Albert Ellis saw as the corollary of human free will. We discussed these in Chapter 5.

There are no stages in the development of self-actualisation in Rogers' theory. The emphasis is on providing the right environment for optimum growth to occur. Rogers was keen to promote the development of what he termed person-centred families, where his principles would be applied, as well as person-centred educational establishments. Personality development can be a lifelong process, Rogers felt. Unlike Freud and many of the other psychoanalysts that we have studied, Rogers does not see childhood as determining the adult personality. Individuals are always open to change in his model, and personality growth can occur at any age.

The endpoint of self-actualisation for Rogers was what he called the **fully functioning person**. Such an individual is described as being very open to experience and high in self-acceptance, with few if any conditions of worth. As a result, they have a positive self-concept and high self-esteem. Their organismic valuing process guides the choices they make in life, and other people's expectations and judgements of them do not influence them. If they make mistakes, they are able to acknowledge them openly and learn from them. Rogers suggested that such

individuals are true to their inner selves. He gave examples of artists like El Greco, who painted in a style that was not accepted at the time; even so, he did not deviate from it to gain social acceptance or to make money, being convinced that it was right for him and it was art. A summary of the attributes of the fully functioning person is given in Table 6.2. Rogers saw individuals as continually growing, and he suggested that we have a concept of how we wish to grow; this description is also included in Table 6.2.

In terms of personal relationships, the fully functioning individual respects the rights of others and cares deeply for them. Such individuals display high levels of unconditional positive regard for the other people in their lives and are capable of forming deep relationships. Self-actualisation is not conceptualised as the endpoint of development but rather as a journey that the individual is on. It is a process that the individual is continually engaged in, seeking out satisfying experiences and discarding unsatisfying ones whenever possible or compensating for them in other ways. For example, the individual who undertakes a job that they find dull and boring may continue to do the job as no other option is readily available and they need money to live, but they may experience self-actualisation in other ways. Such an individual may find activities such as gardening or other hobbies, or voluntary work in the community or close relationships within their family that fulfil their needs for self-actualisation. The self-actualising individual is described as being *congruent* with the totality of their lives. They feel satisfied with their life and believe that they fit within it. From this it is clear that self-actualisation is about an attitude to life, to oneself, and to others. It is part of an ongoing process of living.

Table 6.2 Rogers' goals for counselling and for living.

Overall goal

The fully functioning (mature) person

Personal qualities

- Open to experience and able to perceive realistically
- Rational and not defensive
- Engaged in existential process of living
- Trusts in their own organismic valuing process
- Construes experience in an existential manner
- Accepts responsibility for being different from others
- Accepts responsibility for own behaviour
- Relates creatively towards the environment
- Accepts others as unique individuals
- Prizes herself or himself
- Prizes others
- Relates openly and freely on the basis of immediate experiencing
- Communicates rich self-awareness when desired

Overall goals for development throughout life

What Rogers terms the person of tomorrow

Personal qualities

- Openness to the world, both inner and outer
- Desire for authenticity
- Scepticism regarding science and technology
- Desire for wholeness as a human being
- The wish for intimacy
- Accepts other people as they are
- Cares for others
- Attitude of closeness towards nature
- Anti-institutional in approach
- Trusts their own internal authority
- Material things are unimportant
- A yearning for spiritual values and experiences

Rogers' conceptualisation of psychological problems

The fully functioning person, as we have seen, is the ideal and rarely achieved as most of us have conditions of worth associated with our self-concept. The greater the conditions of worth associated with an individual's self-concept, the less psychologically healthy they are in Rogers' model. The individual is alienated from their true self, and this situation is expressed either in feelings of discontent, symptoms of psychological illness or antisocial behaviour or combinations of all three. Rogers avoided using diagnostic labels to describe his clients as he felt that using labels served to stress the expertise of the therapist and consequently disempowered the client. We discussed this approach in some detail, you will remember, in the introduction when we covered Rogers' objections to the medical model of illness and treatment. Clients simply need to be provided with an empowering environment that will allow them to get in touch with their true selves. This will then provide the guidance necessary for them to make helpful changes in the way that they run their lives. This environment is provided through an empowering relationship with the therapist, and we shall examine this concept next.

The principles of Rogerian counselling

You may recall that, like all the theories we have examined so far, Rogers' theory of personality originated in his clinical work with disturbed clients. His aim was to develop a

more effective method of helping individuals, and through this his conceptualisation of what human beings are like emerged. He believed that human nature is positive and that we are motivated towards positive growth and continual development. The disturbed individual has deviated from this positive path, as they have not had sufficiently growth-enhancing relationships, experiences and environments. The aim of therapy is to provide the client with the experience of a good relationship in a safe environment. This focus becomes even more apparent when we examine Rogers' goals for counselling in Table 6.2 and see that the goals for counselling are identical to his goals for living. The aim in counselling is to provide a safe environment and experience of a good relationship as Rogers believed that this will be sufficient to allow the individual to get in touch with their true organismic self and rediscover their way to self-actualisation. It is about finding their true selves. This may sound like 'hippie' sentiments; and Rogerian counselling and derivatives of it were very popular in the 1960s and 1970s with the general public, especially the young. Group sessions based on Rogerian principles were common and led to what became known as the encounter group experience. These were groups set up to allow people to explore aspects of themselves in a psychologically safe environment. Through these encounters with themselves and others, they would find their true selves (Rogers, 1970). We will now examine in more detail Rogers' approach to therapy and the provision of a psychologically safe, empowering environment.

The aim of therapy was to facilitate a reintegration of the self-concept. To understand what this means, we need to



Ideas of how we see and reflect on ourselves are very important in Rogers' theory.

Source: Pearson Education Ltd. Tudor Photography

Stop and think



Rogers' approach to treatment

It may have registered that when discussing Rogers' approach to treatment, sometimes we talk about the treatment as counselling and sometimes as therapy. Rogers himself does this also in places in his writing; when he talks about the core conditions of counselling, for example, and then when he talks about client-centred therapy. To clarify, both counselling and therapy refer to very similar processes and there is a huge overlap in terms of what actually happens in treatment sessions. However,

counselling tends to deal with less severe psychological problems than does therapy. Consequently, counselling generally takes less time than therapy. Many therapists begin their training as counsellors, and we believe that this practice has added to the confusion. Therapy is about utilising additional theory-based techniques that go beyond core counselling skills. For example, the psychoanalytic therapist may use dream analysis, free association or interpretation in addition.

return to conditions of worth and what they imply. If you have many conditions of worth, you are very aware of having imperfections as you have an image of the ideal person that you should be. If you were this ideal, then you would be more loveable and more admired than you currently are. It might involve being smarter, kinder, more organised, healthier or whatever. This would be our **ideal self**. We use this ideal self to judge ourselves. When we do not meet the criteria in our ideal self, our self-esteem is lowered, making us feel even worse about ourselves. To put it simply, the individual with few conditions of worth accepts themselves as they are, and the gap between their ideal self and real self is a narrow one. The person with many conditions of worth has a much wider perceptual gap between how they see themselves and how they would like to be; their ideal self. The existence of this gap leads to unhappiness and discontent and in extreme conditions, depression. The aim of therapy is to reduce this gap and to reintegrate the self-concept with the real self. The individual then becomes more accepting of who they are and are happier consequently. At this point, many students then ask, 'But what if the client appears to be a thoroughly rotten individual? Does Rogerian therapy still involve helping the person feel good about themselves?' The answer to this question lies in Rogers' conception of human nature and the source of human motivation. If you recall from earlier in the chapter, Rogers asserted that human nature is basically benign. As a species, we want to do good things; and our actualising tendency, the sole source of motivational energy, is a positive drive towards growth. So, to return to the question posed, Rogers did not accept the idea that individuals are rotten. The apparently rotten individual had their actualising tendency blocked at some point due to poor relationship and/or environmental experiences. Counselling aims to allow the individual to rediscover their actualising tendency, and in doing so, they will be able to solve their problems and choose a more constructive way forward. This will then

maximise their chances of happiness. Rogers, like Ellis in the last chapter, saw human beings as a hedonistic species, with happiness/contentment as our ultimate goal.

The role of the therapist or counsellor

To achieve successful counselling, Rogers emphasised that the relationship between client and therapist is crucial. The clients have the ability to change within themselves, and the counsellor's role is to facilitate the process. To achieve a successful outcome, the counsellor needs to possess certain qualities and the client needs to be in a certain psychological state so that a relationship that facilitates growth in the client is created. These conditions have come to be labelled the **core conditions of counselling** and will now be described in turn. None of the conditions are considered more important than the others; Rogers (1959) stated that all need to be present.

The core conditions of counselling which facilitate personal growth

- a Both the *client and the therapist must be in psychological contact*. By this condition, Rogers meant that counselling is about more than simply chatting to someone. It is not about exchanging pleasantries, although counsellors may do so initially to help put clients at their ease. It is about discussing inner feelings focused on the self. Rogers (1961) suggested that clients frequently go through stages in their conversations with their therapist before they are making true deep psychological contact (Figure 6.4). These stages are described as follows:
 - **Stage 1** – The client's talk is about other people mostly, not themselves. Clients may make general statements or discuss their children or work colleagues and so on.

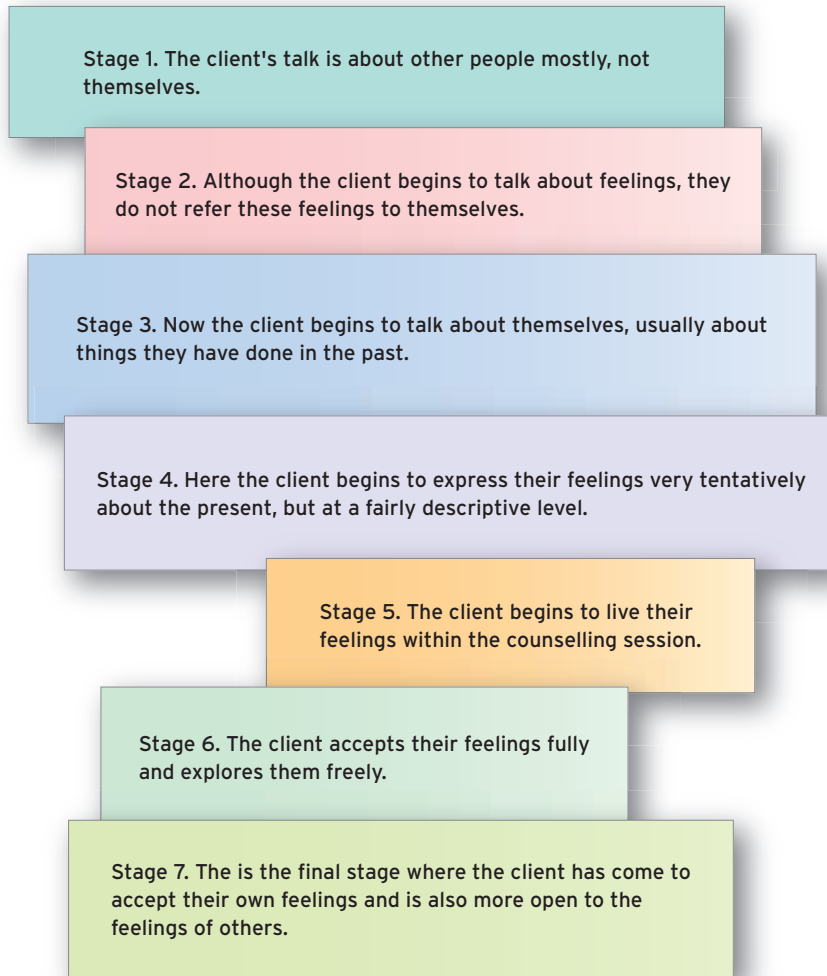


Figure 6.4 The seven stages clients frequently go through before they make true deep psychological contact with their therapist.

- **Stage 2** – Although the client begins to talk about feelings, they do not refer these feelings to themselves. They are still general statements about how people feel.
 - **Stage 3** – Now the client begins to talk about themselves, usually about things they have done in the past. At this point, psychological contact is becoming properly established.
 - **Stage 4** – Here the client begins to express how they feel now, but very tentatively. Clients still express their feelings at a fairly descriptive level.
 - **Stage 5** – At this point, the client begins to live their feelings within the counselling session. Emotions are expressed spontaneously, and the client is focused on the present. They may still be a little tentative in recognising fully how they feel.
 - **Stage 6** – Now the client can accept their feelings fully and explores them freely.
 - **Stage 7** – This is the final stage, where the client has come to accept their own feelings and is also more open to the feelings of others. The person is in touch with themselves psychologically and can also relate to others in the same way.
- Obviously, there will be individual differences in how long this process takes. Some individuals may establish psychological contact within the first session, while for others it will take longer as they adjust to the process.
- b** The *client is in a state of incongruence* and feels anxious about it. By this condition, Rogers meant that the client is emotionally upset. It is this emotional upset that provides the motivation for clients to come for

counselling. If you are happy and your life is going well, you are unlikely to feel the need to seek out a counsellor.

- c The *counsellor is congruent in the relationship*. Rogers said that the counsellor must be genuine and not simply role-playing. Counsellors must be aware of their own feelings and be at ease with them. They must also be able to communicate their feelings if this is appropriate. To facilitate this congruence, most schools of counselling now require trainee counsellors to undertake personal counselling or therapy as part of their training. Counsellors are also required to have their work supervised regularly by another trained counsellor. This is a further check that they are dealing honestly with any feelings that the clients may provoke in them.
- d The therapist experiences **unconditional positive regard** for the client. This is one of the crucial qualities required by counsellors, according to Rogers (1951, 1961). Experiencing unconditional positive regard requires the therapist not to judge the client, but to value them as another human being. They have worth simply because they exist within Rogers' humanistic perspective, and all human beings should be treated with respect and dignity.
- e The therapist experiences an **empathic understanding** of the client's internal frame of reference. This condition is about accepting that there is no external reality, but that we all have a subjective view of the world. We discussed taking this phenomenological perspective in the introduction to humanistic theories at the start of the chapter. The role of the therapist is to try to understand the client's view of the world, so that they can better understand why the client feels as they do. Empathy is a concept that is often misunderstood and is frequently confused with sympathy. Comparing the two concepts is a useful way of increasing our understanding of them. Sympathy is what we usually give to our friends when they are having problems. We agree that what has happened to them is awful, and we say that we understand how they are feeling. What we are actually doing is saying that we know what they are going through, yet Rogers would say that we can never truly understand what someone else is going through. Further, when expressing sympathy we are agreeing with the individual's negative interpretation of the event. We are reinforcing their perception of the event as awful. However, the role of the counsellor is to help the client feel better about what has happened, so reinforcing the client's negative worldview of the event is not a good starting point. To be empathic, the counsellor is required simply to try to understand what the client is experiencing and feeling and not to judge or evaluate

the experience. The counsellor, by listening carefully and asking questions to help them really understand what has happened, also helps the client to become clearer in their own mind about their situation. In this way, the counsellor is facilitating the client's understanding of their situation.

By not judging the client, the therapist also introduces the client to the idea of not judging themselves. Rogers believes that continually judging oneself is unhelpful. It implies that you are comparing yourself with an ideal self, as we have already discussed. Self-acceptance is the goal for counselling and for living in Rogers' model. It is accepted that as human beings we will make mistakes, but the aim is to help people learn from their mistakes. This position is very similar to that advocated by Albert Ellis in his Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy that we covered in the last chapter. Rogers went further in that he felt that if individuals are in touch with their real organismic self, then they are less likely to make mistakes in their lives (Rogers, 1961).

- f *The client perceives the counsellor's unconditional positive regard for them and the counsellor's empathic understanding of their difficulties*. Rogers (1959) emphasised that it is crucial for the counsellor to be able to convey their empathy and unconditional positive regard to the client. The client needs to experience this feeling of being valued and of someone really trying to understand them, accepting them and valuing them as another human being. This is the positive emotional environment that Rogers said we all need to optimise our chances of self-actualising. It is acceptance and valuing with no conditions of worth attached. For many clients, it may be their first experience of such a relationship where they feel valued and understood. This then is the relationship that Roger claimed will facilitate change and growth.

Rogers (1959) claimed that if a good therapeutic relationship is established, which involves meeting all the six core conditions of counselling, then clients will change in the following ways:

- Clients will have *more realistic perceptions of their world*. They will also be more open to new experiences.
- Clients will *behave more rationally*. They are more in touch with their actualising tendency, which guides them to grow in positive ways. They will engage more in developing themselves.
- The level of *personal responsibility* that they take for their own behavioural choices will increase. They will trust their own organismic valuing process. They will have learnt how to help themselves, and they will have a

clearer understanding of the nature of the choices they make.

- Clients' *levels of self-regard will increase*. They will have lost many of their conditions of worth and have a much higher degree of unconditional self-acceptance. Their feelings about themselves are now based on their own values rather than on the praise and needs of others in their lives. Fundamentally, they will know that as people they are sound although sometimes they may behave in mistaken ways. This is similar to the distinction Ellis made between judging behaviour, but not the person (Chapter 5).
- Clients will also have an *increased capacity for good personal relations*. If you are self-accepting, as we saw earlier in the discussion of conditions of worth and parenting, then you are more likely to accept others without conditions of worth attached. Rogers (1959) clearly defined what he meant by good personal relationships. He felt that such relationships involve accepting others as unique individuals, prizing them, relating openly and freely to them, communicating appropriately and being genuine in your feelings.
- Rogers believed that self-actualisation resulted in the individual *living ethically*. The individual is seen as a trustworthy person who does not infringe on the rights of others and can distinguish between good and evil. Rogers suggested that the following qualities within the individual contribute to this change:
 - They trust in their own internal feelings rather than relying on external authority to do what is right. This is based on Rogers' positive view of human nature and human motivation.
 - Their value system will focus more on people and relationships, and they will be fairly indifferent to material things.
 - They will develop more of a closeness and a reverence for nature. They will feel more at one with the world.
 - Rogers suggests that they will also have a yearning for values to guide their lives and for spiritual experiences.

These were very substantial claims to make about the benefits of Rogerian counselling, and Rogers was keen to provide research to assess its validity. Much of his early research involved the case study approach, where he would provide a detailed account of a client's progress (Rogers, 1954). To improve on the evaluation of the effects of counselling, Rogers adopted the Q-sort to measure clients' self-concepts. The detail of the Q-sort is outlined in Stop and think: Q-sort measurement of the self-concept on page 148.

At the start of counselling, the correlation between the client's current self-concept and ideal self is low. What this means is that the individual does not accept themselves as

they are; they may wish to be cleverer, more reliable or whatever. After counselling, the correlation between the self and the ideal self tends to be much higher. What this means in practice is that individuals are selecting the same items to describe how they are and how they would like to be. Rogers and his colleagues carried out ambitious research projects to assess the effectiveness of client-centred therapy. Truax and Carkhuff (1967) provide a detailed review of this work. The studies quoted provide some support for the effectiveness of Rogerian counselling, but not all the studies are unproblematic. Many of the measures of improvement are not objectively based; rather, they are self-report ratings completed by the client and/or therapist. Obviously, if clients and therapists have invested significant amounts of time and perhaps money on therapy, they are unlikely to rate the experience as having been worthless. More objective measures of changes in the client's behaviour would be preferable for measuring the effectiveness of therapy. There is also a lack of long-term follow-up studies to assess how lasting any changes obtained are.

Evaluation of Rogers' theory

We will now evaluate the Rogers theory using the eight criteria we identified in Chapter 1: description, explanation, empirical validity, testable concepts, comprehensiveness, parsimony, heuristic value and applied value.

Description

Rogers, like Maslow, is criticised for his overly optimistic conceptualisation of human beings. As a total description of human behaviour, Rogers' theory is limited. His initial focus is on abnormal development and psychopathology and its treatment. However, his concept of conditions of worth provides a very valuable way of describing the mechanisms that we use to evaluate our own behaviour. His description of how the self is construed is innovative, and his comparison of self and ideal self is valuable. Intuitively, these concepts seem to provide useful descriptions and are therefore high in face validity.

His phenomenological approach represents a real attempt to engage with the world as individuals experience it. However, such an approach with its focus on conscious experience excludes what many will conceptualise as the rich world of the unconscious. We previously explored this concept in Chapters 2 and 3. Another danger of Rogers' approach is that it may rely so much on individual observations that objective measurement is ignored and no knowledge is generated that is applicable to the wider science of psychology.

Stop and think



Q-sort measurement of the self-concept

The Q-sort technique is used to measure an individual's self-concept. It was developed by an American psychologist, Stephenson, and published in 1953. It is administered in many formats, depending on the approach of the psychologist using it; but the basic principles remain the same (Block, 1961; Rogers and Dymond, 1954). A list of around 100 adjectives or short statements describing personality attributes of individuals is generated. Each statement is printed on a separate card. Some typical examples are given here:

I am ambitious.	I am generally happy.
I am a worrier.	I am a weak person.
I am enthusiastic.	I am pessimistic.
I am careless.	I am a procrastinator.

Individuals are asked to sort the cards into nine categories, according to how well the phrase on the card describes who they are. Category 1 includes the descriptions that are most like the individual, and category 9 includes those that are least like the individual. The scale looks as follows:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Most								Least
like me								like me

At the start of therapy, clients do the task described earlier, which gives a measure of their *current self-concept*. It is not an easy task to complete, and clients normally begin by putting the cards into piles that are like them or not like or not applicable to them. Then they make finer distinctions within each pile, comparing attributes to determine what represents them best. Stephenson argued that the effort involved adds to the reliability of the method as a representation of an individual's self-concept. Once this step is completed and recorded, the pack of cards is shuffled and clients are asked to sort the pack again to match their **ideal self**.

The hypothesis is that an individual's self-concept should change over the course of therapy. Individuals should be more in touch with their organismic self and more accepting of themselves. Used in the manner described, the Q-sort allows measurement of the discrepancy between a client's actual and ideal selves. This was the way that Rogers used it. However, it can be used with a range of personality variables or to measure preferences of any sort. Variations of the Q-sort technique, as it has become labelled, are still utilised quite widely within psychology.

Rogers was very aware of this, and his utilisation of measures such as the Q-sort was his attempt to overcome this shortcoming.

Explanation

Rogers attempted to explain a vast range of human behaviour ranging from what we require for optimum individual development to the nature of the society that would promote psychological health. However, he used the same principles that he developed for counselling troubled individuals to propose solutions for societies and indeed for the world's problems. This ignores the social, historical and political factors that play a crucial role in developing and maintaining these problems and leads to his explanations being limited in scope and somewhat reductionist in nature. His underlying thesis was that if individuals communicated better, then society's problems would be solved. While good communication is helpful, it is unrealistic and

overly optimistic to see it as the solution to what are very complex problems.

Empirical validity

Rogers was very aware of the need to provide empirical evidence to validate his theory. There is a lot of research on his therapy in particular. The results are generally positive, but all of this research is heavily reliant on self-report measures. Clients self-assess their progress, but this is hardly objective evidence given that they have invested considerable time and frequently money in their treatment, so are unlikely to evaluate it as a negative undertaking. Similarly, therapists provide reports of clients' progress, and here the tendency must surely be to provide a positive assessment. There is a need for more objective measures of therapeutic progress using standardised instruments and/or involving significant others of the client in the assessment of progress.

As we saw earlier, Rogers' idea about human beings knowing intuitively what is good for them received little research support. We know from work on the relationship between attitudes and behaviour that knowing some behaviour is harmful is not a good predictor of whether we practise that behaviour. If this were not so, we would not currently be having problems with binge drinking, obesity, smoking and many other health issues in our society.

Testable concepts

As mentioned already, Rogers was keen to construct a testable theory, and he did encourage research on his concepts. Despite this, some of his concepts are not easy to define. The concept of empathy has been researched, and reliable measures are available. However, concepts like unconditional positive regard and genuineness are more difficult to define and have proved difficult to measure. Rogers does need to be commended for his attempts to produce a testable theory and a therapy that can be evaluated. Traditionally his counselling approach has been described as being non-directive, in that the therapist does not claim to know what is best for the client. Clients produce their own solutions. This idea that Rogerian therapists are somehow less directive than other therapists is contentious. As videos of his therapy sessions show, Rogers himself made considerable use of non-verbal signals when interacting with his clients. In this way he is likely to have influenced clients. This claim of non-directiveness can thus be seen to be difficult to objectively assess.

Comprehensiveness

Most of Rogers' work focuses on understanding psychopathology and developing an intervention that could be used as an effective treatment. This meant that his early work was not very comprehensive. Later in his life, he expanded his interests to look in more detail at development, education and the effect of culture and society's institutions on mental health. In this way, his approach became more comprehensive. His work on social and political structures, while interesting, is very speculative.

Parsimony

Rogers has chosen to take a broad approach to human behaviour; but despite this, his theory utilises very few concepts. He fails the parsimony criteria by using too few concepts and assumptions. This results in imprecision, as his concepts are applied very widely to explain very different phenomena. A good example is his explanation of psy-

chopathology. This is too simplistic to explain the full range of psychopathologies that have been documented and results in a reductionist approach.

Heuristic value

Rogers' work has provoked a great deal of controversy within psychology and continues to provoke debate. This in itself is a valuable contribution to make to a science. His humanistic and phenomenological stance has led to a re-evaluation of the importance of the individual and their subjective worldview. His emphasis on the concepts of self and ideal self also led to more attention being paid to these concepts and significant amounts of research being undertaken. His ideas about the core conditions of counselling also led therapy and counselling trainers to reflect on the educational training of counsellors, and useful debates ensued.

Applied value

Rogers' theory has been applied widely. This is certainly one of its strengths. His views of therapy have helped define the training of most counsellors. The recent trend, to encourage counselling psychologists to be trained in several schools of counselling, generally results in trainee counsellors beginning their education with Rogerian therapy. This means that most counsellors are familiar with the core conditions and develop active listening skills and empathy for their clients.

Rogers was also extremely influential in the development of group approaches to psychological treatments. The development of encounter groups in the 1960s and 1970s was attributable to Rogers' influence. These were group experiences designed to help individuals explore their true inner selves and thereby set them on the road to self-actualisation.

Final comments

Now you should understand what is meant by humanistic theories in psychology and how they evolved. You should be familiar with the developmental experiences that influenced the theorising of Maslow and Rogers and appreciate the Maslow and Rogers' conceptualisations of human nature. You should also be familiar with Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the motives related to it, understand the principles of personality development and the causes of mental illness as described by Maslow and Rogers, be familiar with Rogers' conceptualisation of self-actualisation and its importance in development and understand the principles of

Rogerian counselling, including the importance of the core conditions of counselling. You should also be able to outline the Q-sort method of measuring the self-concept and

the ideal self. You should also be able to critically evaluate the work of Maslow and Rogers.

Summary

- Maslow and Rogers' theories were based upon the European tradition of existential philosophy. Existential philosophy is concerned with ontology, defined as 'the science of being'.
- Maslow and Rogers' theories are humanistic personality theories. They emphasise **personal growth**. Human nature is conceptualised as being positive; the focus is on the here and now, not the past.
- Both theorists adopt a phenomenological approach focusing on the uniqueness of each individual and aiming to understand their experience. Humanistic therapists aim merely to help their clients understand what their problems are and do not provide solutions.
- Human beings have innate tendencies towards healthy growth and development that Maslow labelled **instinctoid tendencies**. These are weak positive tendencies that can easily be overcome by negative environmental influences. Healthy development depends on the fostering of the instinctoid tendencies in children.
- Maslow described two types of human motives: deficiency motives (D-motives) that are needs we are driven to fulfil and growth motives, called being motives (B-motives). Satisfaction of B-motives brings pleasure and acts as further motivation to achieve and develop.
- Maslow outlined a hierarchy of needs to describe human motivation. These begin with physiological needs, then safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs and the need for self-actualisation. Individuals require that their lower-level needs be met before higher-level needs come into play.
- Self-actualisation is the ultimate goal that is not achieved by everyone. Self-actualisers are unique individuals with metaneeds that are different from the normal hierarchy of needs. Self-actualisers think differently, engaging more in being cognitions (B-cognitions), and are distinguished by having peak experiences linked to their B-cognitions.
- Maslow does not produce much detail about development in childhood other than to stress the importance of children being given the freedom to develop according to their inner selves.
- Maslow argued that mental illness was the result of the individual's inner needs not being met.
- Client-centred therapy refers to Rogers' feeling that clients are the best experts on themselves and have the power to solve their own problems. The therapist merely facilitates the process by providing a good relationship experience for the client in an empowering environment.
- Individuals have an innate drive to self-actualise. This is our sole motivating drive in Rogers' model. As long as our actualising tendency is not blocked, healthy development is assured. Blocks to self-actualising result in psychopathology.
- The concept of self is crucial in Rogers' model. He distinguishes between the real organismic self and the self-concept.
- In ideal circumstances, Rogers suggested, individuals receive unconditional positive regard. This is being valued simply for existing, with no conditions. Few individuals experience just this. Most parents and educational experiences impose conditions of worth. This results in us developing conceptualisations of our ideal selves that we compare with our real selves.
- How parents relate to their children will be heavily influenced by the adequacy of the parents' own self-concepts and the number of conditions of worth that they themselves have.
- Rogers felt that individuals intuitively know what is good for them, but there is no evidence to support this contention.
- The fully functioning person emerges as a result of self-actualisation, and Rogers provided descriptions of such individuals.

- Rogers' theory originated in his clinical work, and a lot of his writing related to the development of his approach to counselling and therapy.
- The aim of therapy was to facilitate a reintegration of the self-concept. Most clients have many conditions of worth, so they have an idealised self and their current self falls very short of this ideal. The aim of therapy is to reduce this gap and to reintegrate the self-concept with the real self.
- Rogers stressed that the relationship between the therapist and the client is crucial. He outlined the core conditions of counselling to describe the nature of the relationship. Rogers claimed that all that is required for positive change to occur is that these core conditions of counselling be met.
- Rogers was very aware of the importance of trying to provide research evidence to evaluate his approach, and he endeavoured to do this. While there is some support, the methodologies he used tend to rely very heavily on self-report measures.
- Finally, guidelines for evaluating both theories are provided.



Connecting up

You might wish to look back at Chapter 3 and Jung's discussion of individuation and compare and contrast these ideas with Maslow's ideas of self-actualisation.



Critical thinking

Discussion questions

- Is the distinction between B-love and D-love a valuable one in helping us understand human relationships?
- How do you feel about the concept of peak or optimal experiences? Does it seem a useful concept and a description of the ultimate human experience?
- What would you see as the strengths and weaknesses of self-actualisers?
- Is it as difficult to find your goals in life and life satisfaction as Maslow and Rogers imply?
- Compare the conceptualisations of human nature posited by Maslow, Rogers and Freud. Is there anything in the biographical experiences of the three theorists that might help explain these differences?
- Do you consider conditions of worth to be a valuable concept? Can you identify any of your own conditions of worth? Do they play a useful role in your psyche?
- Is there any evidence to support Rogers' organismic valuing process?
- Is Rogers' distinction between what is generally termed 'love' and unconditional positive regard a valid one? If so, is it an important distinction in your view?

- How realistic is it to describe Rogers' approach to therapy as non-directive?
- Rogers is adamant that all self-evaluation is bad, even positive evaluations. Can you explain why he takes this view? Do you agree?
- How adequately do humanistic theorists explain human motivation?

Essay questions

- Critically discuss Rogers' theory and practice of person-centred therapy.
- Critically discuss Maslow's theory of self-actualisation.
- Discuss how developmental experiences influenced the theorising of Rogers.
- Compare and contrast Maslow's and Rogers' theory of self-actualisation.
- Critically discuss Rogers' contribution to our understanding of human personality.
- Critically discuss Maslow's contribution to our understanding of human personality.



Going further

Books

- Maslow, A. (1987). *Motivation and personality* (3rd edn). New York: Harper & Row. This book presents an easily readable account of the main aspects of his theory. It is Maslow's most comprehensive description of his theory and his research on healthy individuals.
- Maslow, A. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being*. Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand. In this book, Maslow addresses the concept of self-actualisation and offers strategies for personal growth.
- Thorne, B. (1992). *Carl Rogers*. London: Sage. This book is an excellent introduction to Rogers' work and life. It is written in an accessible style. Thorne is a Rogerian therapist and adds a useful clinical perspective to the theory.
- Rogers, C. R. (1980). *A way of being*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. This book, written by Rogers, covers a lot of material. It includes personal reflections on his own life, his professional work and a final section on education. This latter section includes his thoughts about the changes needed in society to create psychologically enhancing cultures.
- Barrett-Lennard, G. T. (1998). *Carl Rogers' helping system: Journey and substance*. London: Sage. This text presents a fairly comprehensive coverage of Rogers' ideas with a useful review and discussion of research on Rogerian concepts.
- Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On becoming a person: A therapist's view of psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. This is perhaps Rogers' classic book on his theory. It is easy to read and thought provoking. He addresses the topic of personal growth and how it can be facilitated in some detail. The role of research in his theory and in therapy generally is addressed as well as reflections on society and how it impacts on our lives. Recent editions can be found, e.g. Rogers, C. R. (2004). *On becoming a person*. London: Constable.
- Rogers, C. R. and Freiberg, H. J. (1993). *Freedom to learn* (3rd edn). New York: Merrill. As current consumers of

the mainstream Western educational system, you may well find this text relevant and thought provoking. It is a re-edit of Rogers' 1983 text, *Freedom to learn for the 80s* (Columbus, OH: Merrill). Unless an author has a difficult writing style, our preference is for you to read the text by the original author. This is our advice here, as Rogers is easy to read. However, you may find it easier to access the later re-edited text, and this is why we include it here.

Journals

The Journal of Humanistic Psychology is published by Sage Journals and is an interdisciplinary publication for contributions, controversies and diverse statements pertaining to humanistic psychology. Apart from the journal being available being online, with subscription, at <http://www.sagepub.com> you may find that your library subscribes to the online database Expanded Academic ASAP and you may find many articles from the journal there.

Web links

- A site on Rogers written by his daughter, Natalie Rogers, is available online (<http://www.nrogers.com/carlrogers.html>).
- A site that lists all Maslow's publications is available online (<http://www.maslow.com/>).
- Summerhill School (<http://www.summerhillschool.co.uk/>), which we mention in the chapter. If you follow the links, you can also get the Ofsted report on the school and a report on the legal case that the school won when it looked as if the government were trying to close the school in 2000.
- The Block and Block longitudinal study is available online (http://review.ucsc.edu/summer.97/29_years.html).



Film and literature

- *A Christmas Carol* (or to give its full title, *A Christmas Carol in Prose, Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*) by Charles Dickens (1843) tells a story of self-actualisation. The story tells of Mr Scrooge who is a financier who has devoted his life to the accumulation of wealth and has a disregard for friendship and love. Over the

course of Christmas Eve, he has a number of ghostly visitations, and Scrooge finds out that he will end up walking the Earth forever as an invisible and lonely ghost. Following this experience, Scrooge changes his life and reverts to being generous, kindhearted and finding joy in others.

- ***Shirley Valentine*** and ***Educating Rita***, both powerful plays by Willy Russell, outline a woman's self-actualisation. Both plays were made into films (*Educating Rita*, 1983; *Shirley Valentine*, 1989) and were directed by Lewis Gilbert.
- Other films that depict elements of self-actualisation, but with slightly different overtones are ***Thelma and Louise*** (1991, directed by Ridley Scott) and ***Vanilla Sky*** (2001, directed by Cameron Crowe). Both films portray emerging aspects of personality and strengths.
- ***Carl Rogers on Empathy*** (Educational Resource Film; British Association for Counselling). Carl Rogers discusses the concept of empathy. Central for understanding the person-centred therapy process. Concord Video and Film Council.



Explore the website accompanying this text at www.pearsoned.co.uk/maltby for further resources to help you with your studies. These include multiple-choice questions, essay questions, weblinks and ideas for advanced reading.