

Carl Rogers & the Humanistic Approach

SIUE PSYC 340

The background of the slide features a dark grey surface with a repeating pattern of colorful, semi-transparent circles. These circles, in shades of red, yellow, and blue, are arranged in a grid-like fashion, creating a textured, perforated appearance. The circles vary slightly in size and are partially overlapping, giving a sense of depth.

Carl Rogers



Life of Rogers

- Carl Rogers (1902–1987) created **person-centered therapy** based on Maslow's humanistic principles.
- This form of psychotherapy has generated an enormous amount of research and is widely used today.

Life of Rogers

- Born in 1902 in Illinois
- Childhood marked by loneliness and feelings of inferiority
 - Parents were religious, controlling, and appeared to favor his brothers
- Escaped loneliness through reading
 - Became interested in agricultural experiments when his family moved to a farm



Life of Rogers

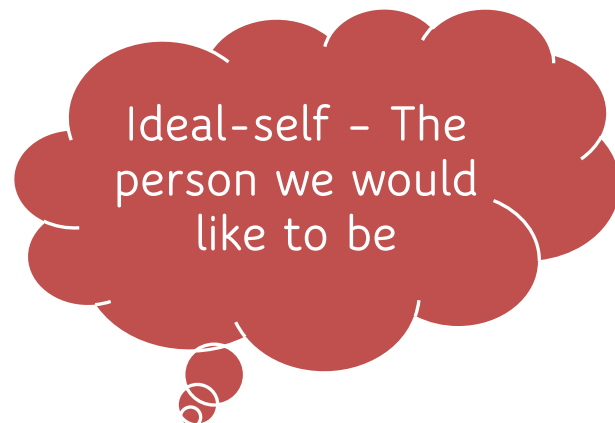
- Initially studied ministry but later earned a PhD in psychology from Columbia University in 1931
- Worked to bring clinical psychology to the mainstream
 - Was a clinician, teacher, and researcher
 - Diagnosed delinquent and underprivileged children
 - Discovered the ability to give and receive love after undergoing therapy

Tendency Toward Actualization

- Believed humans are motivated throughout life by the **actualizing tendency**, an innate tendency to develop, maintain, and enhance the self
 - Encompasses all physiological and psychological needs
 - Guided by the **organismic valuing process**
 - Involves judging our experiences in terms of their value for fostering or hindering our growth
 - Experiences that we perceive as promoting actualization are assigned a positive value

Development of the Self in Childhood

- As infants develop, their experiential field broadens, and their experiences become the basis for their judgments and behaviors.
 - One part of their experience becomes differentiated, the **self-concept**.
 - All 3 aspects of the self-concept strive for consistency:



Development of the Self in Childhood

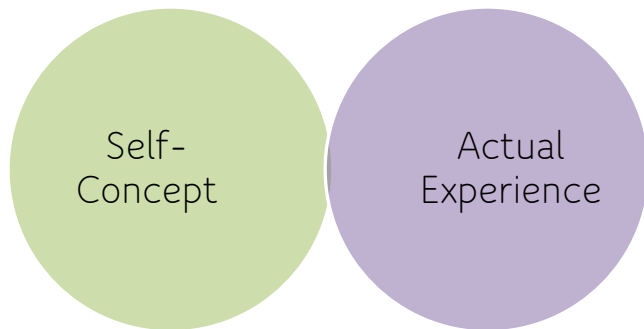
- As the self emerges, infants develop a need for **positive regard** (for acceptance, love, and approval from other people).
 - Their parents fulfill this need conditionally and unconditionally.
 - **Conditional positive regard:** When positive regard is provided only under certain conditions (i.e., when a person expresses desirable behaviors and attitudes)
 - **Unconditional positive regard:** When positive regard (acceptance) persists despite a person's undesirable behavior

Development of the Self in Childhood

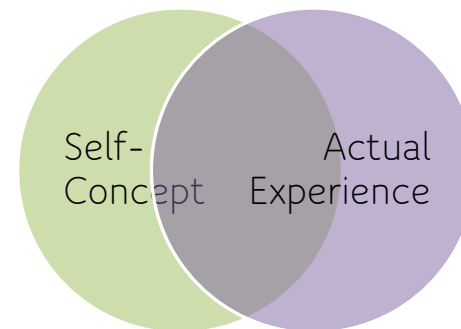
- Over time, infants learn how to foster feelings of acceptance, love, and approval for themselves from within (**positive self-regard**).
- As children learn that parental affection is conditional, they also develop **conditions of worth**, beliefs that they are worthy only under certain conditions.
 - Parental disapproval perceived as disapproval of their developing self-concept
 - Too much disapproval leads them to cease actualizing and rely on others for positive regard

Development of the Self in Childhood

- Their level of psychological adjustment depends on the degree of **congruence** between the self-concept and one's actual experience of the world.
 - Our reality depends on our perception, which may not coincide with reality.
 - The tendency to rely too much on others can lead to **incongruence**, which can result in low self-esteem, constant anxiety, and defensiveness



Incongruence



Congruence

Fully Functioning Person

- The ultimate and necessary goal of life is to become a fully functioning person.
 - Actualizing involves continually testing, growing, striving, and using all of one's potential, a way of life that brings complexity and challenge.
- Fully functioning persons have free choice in creating their selves.
 - Childhood experiences have some impact on personality development, but experiences later in life have a greater influence.

Characteristics of Fully Functioning Persons

Awareness of all experience; open to positive as well as negative feelings

Freshness of appreciation for all experiences

Trust in one's own behavior and feelings

Freedom of choice, without inhibitions

Creativity and spontaneity

Continual need to grow, to strive to maximize one's potential
In a state of actualizing

Rogers' Methods

- Based on his experiences with clients (not experimental methods or tests)
- **Person-centered therapy**
 - The ability to improve personality is centered within and directed by the client.
 - The therapist assists or facilitates the change process.
 - Focuses on clients' subjective conscious experiences (e.g., their feelings and attitudes toward the self and toward other people)
 - Provides unconditional positive regard

Rogers' Methods

- Encounter groups
 - A type of person-centered group therapy in which people learn about themselves and how they relate to others
 - Include 8-15 group members that meet 20-60 hours over several sessions
 - Facilitators help group members to gain insight and become more fully functioning



Rogers' Methods


- Recorded and filmed his person-centered therapy sessions
 - Allowed researchers to more objectively study the client-therapist interaction
 - E.g., evaluation of words, rating of behaviors, emotions expressed
 - Called the recordings a microscope with which to examine the “the molecules of personality change”
 - E.g., [Richie](#) (shown here)



Assessments Based on Rogers' Theory

- Did not use psychological tests but inspired the creation of a few
 - [The Experiencing Scale](#) – Developed by Klein, Mathieu, Gendlin, and Kiesler (1969) to evaluate what clients said in therapy sessions
- Relied on Stephenson's (1953) **Q-sort technique** to assess the self-concept
 - A self-report method in which clients sort a large number of statements about the self into categories that range from most descriptive to least descriptive

See an example of the Q sort technique:
<https://qtip.geography.wisc.edu/#/>

 Home

Sample: Patriotism in the US

Step 1) Click-and-drag to move statements back and forth between the stack and the blanks in the columns below until all blanks are occupied.

1. The bald eagle is an important symbol of American national identity.

Previous Card 9 Cards Next Card

least like how I think

most like how I think

1 2 3 4 5

Research on Rogers' Theory

Research on Rogers's approach has found that:

- Positive self-regard may be more important in individualistic cultures
- Fully functioning persons are open to all experiences
- A child's self-acceptance depends in part on the mother's degree of self-acceptance
- Children whose parents accept them unconditionally have high self-esteem
- Those who possess incongruence between perceived self and ideal self are poorly adjusted emotionally and have low self-esteem and self-actualization
- Failing to realize our innate potential can lead to maladjustment

Strengths and Criticisms of Rogers' Theory

- Influenced both counseling and psychotherapy
- Became popular and highly accessible after its success with WWII veterans
- Core concepts, like self-concept, accepted across different therapeutic orientations
- Completely disregarded the influence of unconscious factors
- Relied on clients' subjective reports, which may be distorted and incomplete
- Some core concepts, like positive self-regard, not universally valued