

Humanistic Approach

Background





The humanistic approach focuses on the importance of unique human experience and suggests that free will has a large part to play in behaviour. Free will is the ability to choose how to behave without being influenced by external forces. It means that we have full conscious control over our own destiny and live by our own intentions. This is described by **Maslow (1943)** who proposed a theory of motivation which puts the idea of reaching one's own potential; self-actualisation at the top of a hierarchy of needs. Another humanistic idea highlights the role of the 'self' in determining happiness. If our view of ourselves is similar to the view of our ideal self, we are believed to be congruent. Incongruence leads to poor self-esteem and a higher risk of mental health issues.

Evidence

According to **Rogers (1959)**, we want to feel, experience and behave in ways which are consistent with our self-image and which reflect what we see ourselves as becoming; our ideal self. The closer our self-image and ideal self are to each other, the more consistent/ congruent we are. This is reflected in a higher sense of self-worth. From this he developed a humanistic approach to treatment called 'client-centred' therapy.

Rogers (1951) viewed the child as having two basic needs: positive regard from other people and independent feelings of self-worth. He argued this developed in early childhood and was formed as a result of the interactions between a child and its mother and father. Rogers believed that we need to be regarded positively by others; we need to feel valued, respected, treated with affection and loved.

Evaluation

-  The humanistic approach adopts an idiographic approach to studying behaviour which focuses on the individual, giving us a greater insight into human behaviour, making it valid.
-  The humanistic approach is holistic, as it does not try to break behaviour down into simpler components and it recognises both nature and nurture as influences over behaviour. This gives a better, whole picture as to why people behave as they do.
-  The humanistic approach is very subjective as it is based on unique feelings or experiences.
-  Many of the research methods used in the humanistic approach, such as unstructured interviews or participant observations, gather qualitative data which can be biased.

