Application and Evaluation of Rogers’ s Theory

Client-Centered Approach and Other Contributors to the Human Potential Movement

QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. According to Rogers, how does psychological distress and pathology develop, and what factors are necessary to bring about psychological change in therapy?
2. How did writers in the human potential movement add to Rogers’ s understanding of human personality?
3. What does the contemporary positive psychology movement say about human personality and potentials?
4. What is existentialism? How do existentialist ideas relate to personality theory and research, and how do they relate, specifically, to the work of Rogers?
5. What are the implications of contemporary research—including cross-cultural research on self-concept, motivation, and personality—for Rogers’ s phenomenological theory?

Client-centered therapy involves

1. Two persons are in psychological contact.
2. The first person, the client, is in a state of incongruence.
   • Self-experience discrepancy
3. The second person, or therapist, is congruent.
4. The therapist experiences unconditional positive regard for the client.
5. Empathic understanding

6. Communication to the client of the therapist’s empathic understanding and unconditional positive regard.

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**Unconditional positive regard in therapy**

Unconditional positive regard: To give a person your full, caring attention without judging or evaluating them. "It is a kind of liking which has strength, and which is not demanding."

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**Transparency**

“Transparency involves expressing your deep feelings, as your feelings rather than as facts about another. Revealing yourself as a person, real and imperfect as You are, in your relationship with another.”
Discrepancies among Parts of the Self

- Small discrepancies -> “health”
- Large discrepancies -> “pathology”
- Discrepancies between self, ideal self, and “ought self” (Higgins, 1987)
  - self – ideal self discrepancy -> disappointment, sadness, and/or depression
  - self – “ought” self discrepancy -> anxiety and agitation.

Distinguishing features of Roger’s Approach

- Belief in the capacity of the client
- Importance of the therapeutic relationship
- Believe in predictable process
- Outcome research should support therapeutic approach.

Global self & Intrinsic motivation

- Emphasized global self-concept, not specific self.
  - Importance of global self-esteem
  - Importance of authenticity
- Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985)
- Cultural variations in intrinsic motivation (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999)
Other figures in the Human Potential Movement

- Kurt Goldstein (1878-1965)
  - Neuropsychiatrist
  - Thought was influenced by treating brain damaged patients.
  - Impressed by plasticity and malleability of the brain.
  - Extrapolated this concept of human motives – basic human motive is to improve.

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970)

- Argued that people are "basically good"
- Critical of psychoanalytic view
- Everyone has an impulse to fulfill their potential (self-actualization).
- Psychopathology results from societies "twisting and frustration" of this impulse.
- Hierarchy of needs.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
RELATED THEORETICAL CONCEPTIONS

• THE POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY MOVEMENT
  • (Sometimes called the "human strengths" movement)
  • Psychologists have tended to:
    • Examine individuals suffering from distress
    • Use those experiences as their foundation for theorizing about people
    • End up with theories that emphasize the negative while overlooking human strengths
  • To rectify this, contemporary psychologists have tried to portray the nature of human strengths and virtues

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RELATED THEORETICAL CONCEPTIONS

• THE POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY MOVEMENT
  • The Virtues of Positive Emotions
  • Psychologists commonly have studied emotions such as fear, anxiety, and anger
  • Have devoted lesser attention to the role of positive emotions — pride, love, happiness — in personality development and functioning

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RELATED THEORETICAL CONCEPTIONS

Existentialism
  • The concern about the meaning of life.
    • Freedom, conscious experience, free will
    • Responsibility
    • Death
    • Loneliness
  • Ex: College age crisis; Middle age crisis
  • Treatment: logotherapy
    • Helping people become what they are capable of becoming.
    • Helping people realize and accept the challenges of the opportunities that are open to them.

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### RELATED THEORETICAL CONCEPTIONS

- EXISTENTIALISM
- *Contemporary Experimental Existentialism*
- Experimental existential psychologists have turned this idea into specific, testable hypotheses
- *Terror management theory (TMT)* of Solomon, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski examines the consequences of the combination of two factors:
  - People’s desire to live (which people share with all other animals)
  - People’s awareness of the inevitability of death (an awareness that is uniquely human)

### RELATED THEORETICAL CONCEPTIONS

- EXISTENTIALISM
- *TMT*
- To increase mortality salience, subjects are asked to respond to tasks such as
  - “Describe the emotions that the thought of your own death arouse in you”
  - “Write down what you think will happen to you as you physically die”
  - Viewing a film of a gory automobile accident
  - Responding to death anxiety scales
  - Being exposed to subliminal death primes

### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THEORY AND RESEARCH

- CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH ON THE SELF
- *Cultural Differences in the Self and the Need for Positive Self-Regard*
- Rogers believed that:
  - All people have a need for positive self-regard
  - In the absence of unconditional positive regard, the individual’s need for a positive self-view may be unfulfilled, leading to psychological distress
  - Is this how things work for all persons the world over?
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THEORY AND RESEARCH

• CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH ON THE SELF
  • Cultural Differences in the Self and the Need for Positive Self-Regard
  • Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama (1999) reviewed evidence that the basic patterns and functions of self-esteem seem to vary from one culture to another
    • In the US, most people report having relatively high self-esteem
    • In Japan there is no sign whatsoever of this bias; many people report low self-esteem as high self-esteem

Critical Evaluation of Client-Centered Approach

• Too much reliance on conscious self-reporting.
• Universalizes what may be culture-specific
  • Cultural variability of self-concept
  • Cultural variability of self-regard
• Congruence may not necessarily lead to mental health.