

- Freud's work was based on individual case studies of troubled upper-class, Austrian white women who lived 100 years ago. Are their experiences applicable to a population, of say, today's middle-class Japanese men? Were the results even applicable to the vast majority of Austrian women outside Freud's study a century ago? Probably not.
- Development is a lifelong process; it is not simply fixed in childhood.
- Boys' gender identity does not result from an Oedipus complex around the time of kindergarten. Gender identity is achieved even without a same-sex parent around the house (Frieze & others, 1978).
- Freud underestimated peer influence on personality development, and he overestimated parental influence.
- The neural network of children under age 3 is insufficiently developed to sustain the kind of emotional trauma Freud described.
- Freud asked his patients leading questions that may have led to false recall of events that never really happened (Powell & Boer, 1994). These same concerns exist today over reports of "repressed memories" of childhood sexual abuse. Evidence suggests therapists may inadvertently implant false memories of abuse in the way they ask clients questions (Ofshe & Watters, 1994).
- Freud's personal biases are evident in his focus on male development.
- Freud's theory is not scientific. It's difficult to submit concepts such as the Oedipal complex or the id to the rigors of scientific testing.

Freud, nevertheless, left a lasting legacy. Our language is filled with psychoanalytic terms, from *repression* to *inferiority complex*. Freud's ideas have steadily declined in importance in the academic world for years, but some therapists, talk shows, and the public still love the concepts (Seligman, 1994).

The Humanistic Perspective

9. What are some major goals of humanistic psychology, and how does this perspective view personality development?

In contrast to Freud's focus on troubled people, humanistic psychology focuses on fulfilled individuals, with the goal of helping us all reach our full potential. This movement began gaining credibility and momentum in the United States in the 1960s. Humanistic psychologists wanted a psychology that (Schultz & Schultz, 1996)

► **humanistic psychology** A perspective that focuses on the study of conscious experience and the individual's freedom to choose and capacity for personal growth.



Abraham Maslow

1. emphasized conscious experience.
2. focused on free will and creative abilities.
3. studied all factors (not just observable behaviors) relevant to the human condition.

Humanistic psychologists thought psychology in the 1960s was ignoring human strengths and virtues. Freud studied the motives of “sick” people, those who came to him with psychological problems. Humanists, such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, thought we should also study “healthy” people. They believed human personality was shaped more by our unique capacity to determine our future than by our unconscious conflicts or past learning.

Abraham Maslow and Self-Actualization

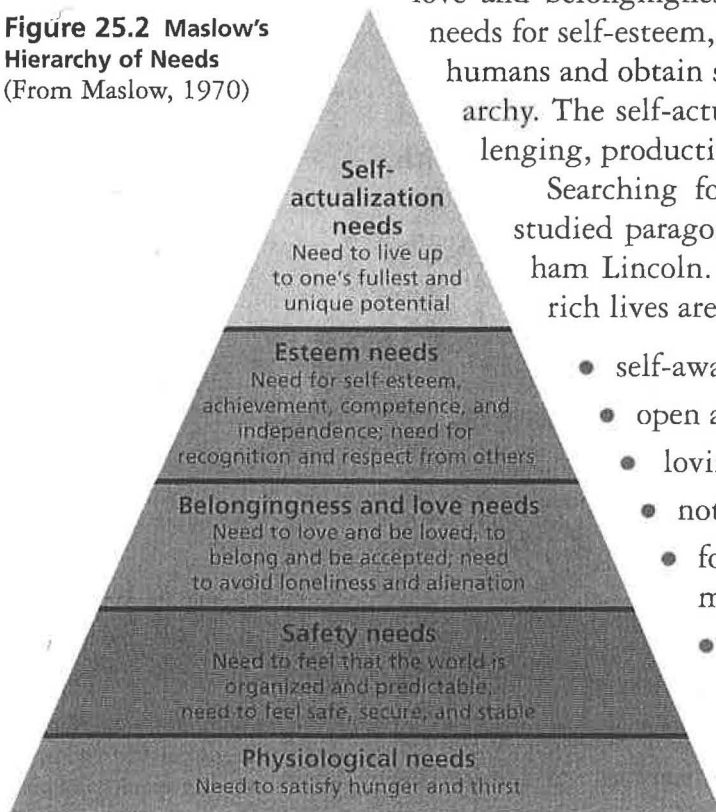
➡ 10. What is the basic idea underlying Maslow’s hierarchy of needs?

Studying psychologically healthy people, Abraham Maslow constructed a *hierarchy of needs* (1970) to help explain personality and personal growth (Figure 25.2). Maslow believed we must satisfy our basic physiological needs for food, water, and air before attempting to meet the security and safety needs of the second level of the hierarchy, and the love and belongingness of the third level. Then, after meeting our needs for self-esteem, we could finally strive to fulfill our potential as humans and obtain **self-actualization**, the highest level of his hierarchy. The self-actualized person works toward a life that is challenging, productive, and meaningful.

Searching for examples of self-actualized people, Maslow studied paragons of society, like Eleanor Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. He found that those who live productive and rich lives are

- self-aware and self-accepting.
- open and spontaneous.
- loving and caring.
- not paralyzed by others’ opinions.
- focused on a particular task they often see as a mission.
- involved in a few deep relationships, not many superficial ones.
- likely to have been moved by personal peak experiences that surpass ordinary consciousness.

Figure 25.2 Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
(From Maslow, 1970)



These mature adult qualities, wrote Maslow, are found in those who have “acquired enough courage to be unpopular,” discovered their calling, and learned enough in life to be compassionate. These individuals have also outgrown any mixed feelings toward their parents and are “secretly uneasy about the cruelty, meanness, and mob spirit so often found in young people” (Shultz & Shultz, 2000).

Carl Rogers and the Person-Centered Approach

11. In Rogers’ view, what three qualities foster human growth?

Humanistic psychologist **Carl Rogers** agreed with Maslow that people are good and strive for self-actualization. Rogers (1980) viewed people much like seeds that thrive when they have the right mixture of ingredients. Just as seeds flourish when given water, soil, and sun, Rogers said, people will flourish when given acceptance, genuineness, and empathy.

And how do we nurture proper human growth in others? By being *accepting*—ideally, through **unconditional positive regard**, or an attitude of total acceptance toward the other person. This attitude values others even though we are aware of their faults and failings. Rogers thought that family members and close friends who express unconditional positive regard for us provide us with great relief. We can let go, confess our most troubling thoughts, and not have to explain ourselves.

We also nurture growth by being *genuine*, according to Rogers. Genuine people freely express their feelings and aren’t afraid to disclose details about themselves.

And, finally, we nurture growth by being *empathic*. Empathy involves sharing thoughts and understanding and reflecting the other person’s feelings. The key to empathy is listening with understanding. When the listener shows understanding, the person sharing feelings has

much easier time being open and honest. Rogers wrote, “Listening, of this very special kind, is one of the most potent forces for change that I know” (Shultz & Shultz, 2000).

Acceptance, genuineness, and empathy help build a strong relationship between parent and child, teacher and student, manager and employee, or any two people. Rogers believed these three qualities are particularly important in the relationship between a client and a therapist.



Carl Rogers

► **Abraham Maslow** (1908–1970) Humanistic psychologist who proposed the hierarchy of needs, with self-actualization as the ultimate psychological need.

► **self-actualization** According to Abraham Maslow, the ultimate psychological need that arises after basic physical and psychological needs are met and self-esteem is achieved; the motivation to fulfill one’s potential.

► **Carl Rogers** (1902–1987) Humanistic psychologist who stressed the importance of acceptance, genuineness, and empathy in fostering human growth.

► **unconditional positive regard** According to Carl Rogers, an attitude of total acceptance toward another person.

► **self-concept** All our thoughts and feelings about ourselves, in answer to the question, “Who am I?”

Assessing Personality and the Self

12. How do humanistic psychologists attempt to assess personality?

If Rogers, Maslow, or any humanistic psychologist wanted to assess your personality, they probably would ask you to answer questions that would help them evaluate your **self-concept**. Your self-concept includes all your thoughts and feelings about yourself, in answer to the question “Who am I?” Rogers, for example, often asked clients to describe themselves first as they actually were and then as they would ideally like to be. He believed that the closer the actual self was to the ideal self, the more positive the person’s self-concept. Assessing personal growth during therapy was a matter of measuring the difference between ratings of ideal self and actual self.

For some humanistic psychologists, any kind of structured personality test is simply too impersonal and detached from the real human being. For them, only a series of lengthy interviews and personal conversations can allow us to understand a person’s unique experiences and personality.

Evaluating the Humanistic Perspective

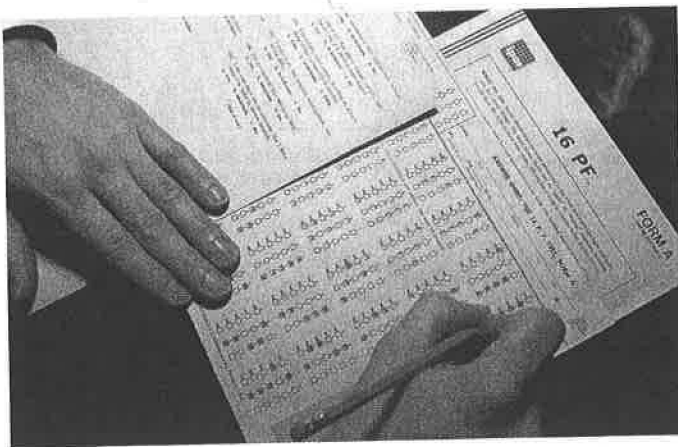
13. What are the greatest contributions—and the greatest weaknesses—of the humanistic perspective on personality?

Too Impersonal? Most humanistic psychologists believe that written personality tests are not an adequate way to assess personality. They prefer conversations and interviews that reveal the individual’s uniqueness.

Carl Rogers once said, “Humanistic psychology has not had a significant impact on mainstream psychology. We are perceived as having relatively little importance” (Cunningham, 1985). Was Rogers correct?

Society has benefited from humanistic psychology. Therapy practices, child-rearing techniques, and workplace management can all attest to a positive humanistic influence.

But there have been unintentional negative effects as well. Some people have mistakenly interpreted unconditional positive regard for children as meaning that we should never offer constructive criticism to a child, or worse, never tell a child no. Critics also point out that many humanistic terms are vague and hard to define precisely so that other researchers can test them. Maslow, for example, stated that the self-actualized person is *spontaneous, loving, and productive*. How do we define these terms to allow Maslow’s assumptions to be tested



scientifically? Without such tests, how do we know whether these terms simply reflect Maslow's personal values?

Whatever its impact on mainstream psychology, humanistic psychology laid the foundation for the *positive psychology* movement of the past few years. As a result, many researchers are now studying the human strengths and virtues, like courage and hope, of healthy people, rather than just the disorders of those who are not psychologically healthy.

R E V I E W

Module 25: The Psychodynamic and Humanistic Perspectives

What's the Point?

Your personality is your characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting. Psychologists study personality from many perspectives, including the psychodynamic and humanistic perspectives.

The Psychodynamic Perspective

1. *What is the psychodynamic perspective, and how does it view personality?*

The psychodynamic perspective grew out of Sigmund Freud's theory of personality, known as *psychoanalysis*. Those who study personality from the psychodynamic perspective share with Freud the beliefs that many of our thought processes occur unconsciously and that our childhood experiences influence our adult personality. But psychodynamic theorists tend to consider unresolved childhood conflicts (especially sexual conflicts) as less important than Freud did.

2. *In Freud's view, how do the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious regions of the mind differ from one another?*

Freud compared the human mind to an iceberg; in each case, most of the entity is hidden from view. The conscious mind holds the thoughts and feelings we are aware of. Just below the surface is the preconscious mind, holding the thoughts and memories not in our current awareness but easily retrievable. At the deepest, unseen level is the unconscious, a vast region of mainly unacceptable thoughts, wishes, feelings, and memories. Freud studied the unconscious by having people free associate (relax and say whatever came into their mind), by observing their habits and accidental misstatements, and by analyzing their dreams.