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| **Humanistic psychology**  |
| **Humanistic psychology AO1** |
| **Free will** All the approaches we have considered so far are deterministic to some degree I their suggestion that our behaviour Is entirely, or at least partly, shaped by forces over which we have no control. Even the cognitive approach, which claims we are free to choose our own thoughts, would still argue that such choice is constrained by the limits of our cognitive system. Humanistic psychology is quite different in this respect, claiming that human beings are essentially self-determining and have free will. This does not mean that people are not affected by external or internal influences but we are active agents who have that ability to determine our own development.For this reason, humanistic psychologists such as Rogers and Maslow, reject scientific models that attempt to establish general principles of human behaviour. As active agents we are all unique, and psychology should concern itself with the study of subjective experience rather the general laws. This is often referred to as a person centred approach I psychology. |
| **Self-actualisation** Evert person has an innate tendency to achieve their potential- to become the best they can possibly be. Self-actualisation represents the uppermost level of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. All four lower levels of the hierarchy (‘deficiency needs’) must be met before the individual can work towards self-regard personal growth as an essential part of what it is to be human. Personal growth is concerned with developing and changing as a person to become fulfilled, satisfied and goal-orientated. Not everyone will manage this, however, and there are important psychological barriers that may prevent a person from reaching their potential. |
| **The self, congruence and conditions of worth** Rogers argues that for personal growth to be achieved an individual’s concept of self (the way they see themselves) must be broadly equivalent to, or have congruence with, their ideal self (the person they want to be). If too big a gap exists between the two ‘selves’ the person will experience a state of incongruence and self-actualisation will not be possible due to the negative feelings of self- worth that arise from incongruence.In order to reduce the gap between the self-concept and the ideal self, Rogers developed client-centred therapy to help people cope with the problems of everyday living. Rogers claimed that many of the issues we experience as adults, such as worthlessness and low self-esteem, have their roots in childhood and can often be explained by a lack of unconditional positive regard (or lack of unconditional love) from our parents. A parent who sets boundaries or limits on their love for their child (conditions of worth) by claiming ‘I will only love you if…’ is storing up psychological problems for that child in the future, Thus, Rogers saw one of his roles as an effective therapist as being able to provide his clients with the unconditional positive regard that they had failed to receive as children. |
| **Humanistic psychology AO3** |
| **Positive approach**P: The humanistic approach has had major influence on counselling psychology.E: Rogers referred to those in therapy as ‘clients’ rather than ‘patients’ as he saw the individual as the expert on their own condition.For Rogers, an effective therapist should provide the client with three things: genuineness, empathy and unconditional positive regardThe aim of Rogers therapy is to increase the persons feeling of self-worth.E: Rogers work transformed psychotherapy and introduced a variety of counselling techniques – not only in clinical settings, but throughout education, health, social work and industry.L: As a result, the explanatory power of the humanistic approach is increased. | **Limited application** P: Humanistic psychology has relatively little real world application. E: Even though Rogerian therapy has revolutionised counselling techniques, and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs has been used to explain motivation. However, it remains the case that the approach has had limited impact within the discipline of psychology as a whole.E: This is a weakness as humanistic psychology lacks a sound evidence base and also due to the fact that the approach has been described, not as a comprehensive theory, but as a loose set of rather abstract concepts.L: As a result, the credibility of the biological approach is reduced. | **Cultural bias** P: One weakness of humanistic psychology is that it may be culturally bias.E: For example, many of the ideas that are central to humanistic psychology, such as individual freedom, autonomy and personal growth, would be much more readily associated with individualistic cultures in the western world. Collectivist cultures such as India, emphasis the needs of the group, community and independence.E: This is a weakness because eastern cultures may not identify so easily with the ideals and values of humanistic psychology, therefore it is possible that this approach would not travel well and is a product of the cultural context within which it was developed. L: As a result, the credibility of the biological approach is reduced. | **Not reductionist**P: A strength of humanistic psychology is that it is not reductionist at all unlike the other approaches. E: For example, humanistic psychology rejects any attempt to break up behaviour and experience into smaller components like other approaches. Freud described the whole of personality as a conflict between three things: id, ego and superego; biological psychologists reduce behaviour to its basic physiological processes etc.E: In contrast, humanistic psychologists advocate holism, the idea that subjective experience can only be understood by considering the whole person. L: As a result the credibility of the humanist approach is increased as it has more validity than its alternatives by considering meaningful human behaviour within its rela life context.  |