 PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY – SELF-ACTUALISATION AND SELF-DETERMINATION

Personality Psychology Week 10 Chapter 9 Summary: Self-Actualisation and Self-Determination

- The theorists discussed in this chapter emphasizes that people have an intrinsic tendency toward self-actualization: the tendency to develop your capabilities in ways that maintain or enhance the self.
- This tendency promotes a sense of congruence, or integration, within the person.
- Its effectiveness is monitored by the organismic valuing process.
- People also have a need for positive regard, acceptance and affection from others.
- Positive regard may be unconditional, or it may be conditional on your acting in certain ways.
- These conditions of worth mean that the person is held worthy only if he or she is acting in a desired manner.
- Conditions of worth, which can be self-imposed as well as imposed by others, can cause you to act in ways that oppose self-actualization.
- Self-determination theory focuses on the difference between behavior that's self-determined and behavior that's controlled in some way fashion.
- People enjoy activities more if they feel they're doing them from intrinsic interest, instead of extrinsic reward.
- People whose lives are dominated by activities that are controlled are less healthy than people whose lives are self-determined.
- Many theorists of this group assume that people have free will.
- This is a very hard idea to test, but people do seem to think they have free will.
- Studies of reactance have shown that people resist threats to freedoms they expect to have.
- Other research has questioned whether free will is illusory, through.
- Behavior that opposes the actualizing tendency creates disorganization in the sense of self.
- Disorganization can be reduced by two kinds of defenses.
- You can distort perceptions of reality to reduce the threat, or you can act in ways that prevent threatening experiences from reaching your awareness (for example, by ignoring them).
- Use of these defenses is seen in the fact that people blame failures on factors outside themselves but take credit for successes.
- People also engage in self-handicapping strategies, creating esteem-protective explanations for the possibility of failure before it even happens.
- The use of self-handicapping is paradoxical, because it increases the likelihood of failure.
- Maslow elaborated on the idea of self-actualization by proposing a hierarchy of motives, ranging from basic physical needs (at the bottom) to self-actualization (at the top).
- Basic needs are more demanding than higher needs, which (being more subtle) can effect you only when the lower needs are relatively satisfied.
- Maslow's intermediate levels appear to relate to the need for positive regard, suggesting why it can be hard to ignore the desire for acceptance from others.
Existential psychologists point out that with freedom comes the responsibility to choose for yourself what the meaning of life has.

The basic choice is to invest your life with meaning or to retreat into nothingness.

When people are reminded of their own mortality, they try harder to connect to cultural values.

Even if people try to find meaning, they can’t escape existential guilt.

No life can reflect all the possibilities it holds, because each choice rules out other possibilities.

The humanistic view on personality uses many assessment techniques, including both interviews and self-reports.

Regarding content, it emphasizes the self-concept, self-actualisation, and self-determination.

One way to assess self-concept is the Q-sort, in which a set of items is sorted into piles according to how much they apply to oneself.

Different 'sorts' can be compared to obtain additional information.

From the humanistic perspective, problems derive from incongruity, and therapy is a process of reintegrating a partly disorganized self.

For reintegration to occur, the client must feel a sense of unconditional positive regard.

In client-centered therapy, people are led to refocus on their feelings about their problems.

The therapist is nonevaluative and simply helps clients to clarify their feelings.

In this viewpoint, the process of therapy blend into those of ordinary living, with the goal of experiencing continued personal growth.

**Personality Psychology Week 10 Chapter 9 Notes**

**Self-Actualization and Self-Determination**

- Humanistic psychology
- phenomenological

**Self-Actualization**

- Carl Rogers
- The potential for positive, healthy growth expresses itself in everyone if there are no strong opposing influences
- Actualisation
- The tendency to develop capabilities in ways that maintain or enhance the organism
- Reflected physically
- Self actualisation – the maintenance or enhancement of self
- Congruence – wholeness or integration within the person.
- Minimizes disorganization and incongruence
- Part of human nature
- Organismic valuing process
- The organism automatically evaluates its experiences to tell whether they are enhancing actualising
• Fully functioning person
• Someone who is self actualizing
• Open to experiencing their feelings
• Not threatened by them
• Open to experiencing the world
• Live lives full of meaning, challenge and excitement but also willingness to risk pain.
• It's a way of functioning

The Need for Positive Regard

• Need to have the acceptance, love, friendship, and the affection of others.
• Positive regard
• Affection given without special conditions
• Unconditional positive regard
• Conditional positive regard
• Conditions of worth
• The conditions under which people are judged worthy of positive regard
• Causes us to start applying the conditions to ourselves
• We give ourselves affection and acceptance only when we have done this
• Conditional self-regard
• Makes you behave so as to fit the condition of worth you're applying to yourself
• Choosing your behavior, values, or goals to get acceptance can interfere with self actualization
• But need for positive regard is so salient
• Its influence is often felt more keenly
• It can be very hard to distinguish a true desire from a condition of worth
• Precondition for acceptance – defines a condition of worth
• Either by others or by yourself
• Always coercive – it pushes you into doing things.
• Can prevent self actualization

Contingent Self-Worth

• People who use their performance in some area in life as a condition for self acceptance
• Contingencies can be motivating
• When a failure happens, it's more upsetting if you have a contingency in that domain
• Has it’s costs
• Can be stressful and disrupts relationships
• Causes people to be more upset by negative interpersonal feedback
• More likely for people to people victims of relationship violence

Self-Determination
• Needs are for autonomy, competence and relatedness
• Some actions are self determined and some are controlled
• A behavior can be controlled even if the control occurs entirely inside your own mind
• Concerns how long you'll stay interested in the behavior
• People lose interest when promised a reward
• Sometimes it can increase motivation though instead of undermining it
• Reward has two aspects
• Controlling aspect – telling you that your actions are not autonomous
• Informational aspect – informing you about yourself
• People want to feel a sense of self-determination in everything you do

Introjection and Identification

• Occurs when a person treats behavior as a should when the person does it to avoid guilt or gain self-approval – introjection
• Controlled behavior but is exerted from the inside
• Identified regulation – the person has come to hold the behavior as personally meaningful and valuable.
• As people mature they regulate less
• Have many applications
• Why they have the aspiration is also important
• Stem from the desire to be accepted by others
• Or avoid a sense of guilt over doing things that others won't like
• Having a sense of autonomy also seems to foster a further sense of autonomy

Need for Relatedness

• People have a intrinsic need for relatedness
• Having the sense of free self-determination
• Autonomy and relatedness can exist side by side
• Support for autonomy is a powerful force
• The need for relatedness has some resemblance to the need for positive regard

Self-Concordance

• It’s good to pursue goals that are consistent with your core values
• You care about these goals more
• You benefit more from attaining them
• Can create a longer term spiral of benefit

Free Will

• People have freedom to decide for themselves how to act and what to become
• Interesting and controversial
• Nearly impossible to know for sure whether people have free will
• They seem to think that they do
• Reactance – when you expect to have a particular freedom and you see it as being threatened
• An attempt to regain or reassert it
• Will continue to be debated

The Self and Processes of Defense

• Self theorist
• The importance of the self
• As the person grows, the self becomes more elaborate and complex
• It never reaches an end state
• Subjective awareness of being
• Self-concept – the set of qualities a person views as being apart of them
• Ideal self – the image of the kind of person you want to be
• Actual self – what you think you are really like
• Congruence – fitting together
• Between actual and ideal selves
• Between actual self and experience

Incongruity, Disorganization, and Defense

• A fraying of the unitary sense of self
• Leads to anxiety
• Can make people vulnerable to further problems
• Leads people to underestimate how much their significant others care for them
• Can make them react poorly to their partners
• The relationship is less likely to flourish
• People defend themselves against incongruence
• Distortion of experience
• Rationalizing
• Seeing an event differently from how it really is
• Denial – preventing threatening experiences from reaching awareness
• A subtle defense – stopping yourself from being in a situation that would allow you to possible experience what you wish to avoid.

Self-Esteem Maintenance and Enhancement

• Defenses protect and enhance self-esteem
• An event must be attributable to the person
• The event must be good or bad
• People either distort their perceptions or distance themselves from the threat
• Denying it's relevance
• Failure can make most of us feel inadequate
• They blame it on things beyond their control
• Task difficulty or on other people, their lack of effort to the task
• You can protect your self esteem by discontinuing the impact of failure
• When you experience success, you can enhance your self esteem
• Success is due to your abilities

Self-Handicapping

• Acting to create the very conditions that tend to produce failure
• You can’t really fail if success is prevented by circumstances beyond your control
• People do this more if they expect a bad outcome to begin with
• Prevents awareness of failing
• You need to be unaware that you are using it
• It’s not a good strategy
• People who use this tend to cope poorly with stress
• Self-handicapping and maladjustment reinforce each other
• Helps create the very failure it was intended to protect against

Stereotype Threat

• Some groups are stereotyped in ways that lead to expectations of poor performance of some sort.
• The sense of being prejudged occupies the person's mind and promotes negative thinking
• Can interfere with performance
• When performance is poor, the stereotype is confirmed
• The person begins to disidentify with the domain in which the threat is occurring
• They stop caring about it
• Denying the experience is relevant to the self
• Makes poor performance more likely – disidentifying

Self-Actualization and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Motives

• Maslow
• Needs as forming a hierarchy
• Needs vary in immediacy and power
• Some are primitive because they are fundamental
• Physiological needs – air, water, food
• Second level – safety and security – shelter, protection
• Love and belongingness – social qualities
• Needs for companionship, affection and acceptance from others
Esteem needs – needs bearing on evaluation
- The need for a sense of mastery and power and a sense of appreciation from others
- Acceptance may not be evaluative
- Appreciation is evaluative
- Maslow – self actualization – the tendency to become whatever you're capable of becoming, to extend yourself to the limits of your capacities
- Visual analogue for core assumptions
- Trade off between biology and uniqueness of being human
- Must deal with lower needs before higher needs
- How people move up through this pyramid of needs
- The further up you go, the more subtle and less survival related the motive
- Deficiency based motives – lower level needs
- Growth based motives – higher level needs
- Rogers ignored bottom two levels
- Esteem needs – positive regard

Characteristics of Frequent Self-Actualizers

- Everyone has the potential to self-actualise
- Intrinsic desire to become more the person that they are capable of being
- Some self actualize more than others
- Are efficient in their perception of reality
- Are more accepting of both themselves and others
- A mental spontaneity – creativity without artificiality
- A fresh appreciation of life
- An excitement in the process of living
- Said to be problem centered – little misleading
- Know relationships require effort
- Transcendent self-actualisers – so invested that it becomes the most precious aspects of their lives
- All experiences seem sacred
- Transpersonal – beyond the person – a way of viewing human potential

Peak Experiences

- The person has a sense of being connected with the elements of his or her surroundings.
- Colors and sounds seem crisper
- Perceptions have sharper clarity
- A loss of sense of time as the experience flows by
- Can occur in a passive way
- Happen more during work then during leisure
- Flow – another term for this type of experience
- The activity doesn’t have to involve anything artistic.
• What's important is what is being done rather than how it is being done

**Existential Psychology: Being and Death**

• They bring responsibilities
• Existential psychology
• Related to the word existence
• It is all anyone has
• Each person needs to take responsibility for their choices

**The Existential Dilemma**

• Dasein – being in the world
• Imply the totality of a person's experience of the self as an autonomous, separate and evolving entity.
• People have no existence apart from the world
• Has no meaning apart from the people in it
• Life inevitably ends in death
• The event no one escapes
• Choice Is between retreating into nothingness or having the courage to be
• Whether or not to commit suicide – choosing nothingness
• They can drift or go along with the crowd
• Life has no meaning unless you create it
• Can be hard to know who you are
• Harder to stare death in the face
• Even honest choices aren't always good ones
• Existential guilt – failure to fulfill promises
• When a person who's free to choose fails to do so.
• Is inescapable – part of the cost of being

**Emptiness**

• The problem of life's emptiness
• People have lost faith in values
• When people lose their commitment to a set of values, they experience a sense of emptiness and meaningfulness

**Terror Management**

• An awareness of one's eventual death creates existential angst, and terror
• People often don't define the meaning of life on their own
• They use a process of social and cultural consensus
• Group identity plays an important role in how people affirm the value of their lives
• A meaningful cultural fabric – they affirm their own value as human beings
• Making people aware of their mortality causes them to become more favorable toward those who uphold their worldview and more negative towards those who don’t
• Mortality salience can make people act more altruistically but only If the charities connect tk their own culture
• Higher on the measure of identity seeking than others
• The reason people view themselves as separate from other animals
• Implications for sexuality
• Reminder of animal nature
• Create romance around it
• The animal is transformed to the spiritual
• The push toward affiliation may be even more important than the affirmation of cultural values

Assessment

• A basic issue is how to go about assessment

Interviews in Assessment

• Finding out what the person is like
• Quite compatible with interviewing
• Maximum flexibility
• Interviewer can be subjective
• Requires empathy
• Must repeatedly check accuracy
• Produces a lot of information
• Content analysis – grouping the person's statements in some way and seeing how many statements fall into each group
• Unless it's highly structured, it's hard to compare people against each other

Measuring the Self-Concept by Q-Sort

• What qualities to assess
• Assess the self concept – q-sort
• Sorting cards into phrases that are most like you or least like you
• Comparing qualities – people forced to self-evaluate

Measuring Self-Actualization

• Degree to which people have characteristics of frequent self-actualisation
• The personal orientation inventory - POI
• Consists of paired statements
• Time competence – living in the now compared to being stuck in the past or the future
- Inner directed – search for values and meaning
- Stronger tendency toward inner direction – frequent self-actualiser

**Measuring Self-Determined-Determination and Control**

- Extent to which a person's actions tend to be self determined or controlled
- Self reports
- Focuses on how people behave in specific domains in life
- Children's academic behavior and prosocial behavior
- College students reason for learning
- Motives underlying religious behavior

**Problems in Behavior, and Behavior Change**

- Lack of congruity within the self creates psychological problems
- Incongruity between experience and self concept or within the self concept yields anxiety
- When the holistic self is threatened by uncertainty, the person becomes not only more distressed but also more rigid.
- The process of therapy is essentially one of reintegrating a partially disorganized self
- The person still needs positive regard but it must be unconditional
- People are less defensive when they are accepted for who they are than when they are not
- Unconditional positive regard is a key to therapy.
- For it to be effective it must be from the person's own frame of reference
- Acceptance for who you think you are
- Empathy is necessary
- Satisfy a condition of worth

**Client-Centered Therapy**

- Person-centered therapy
- The client takes responsibility for their own improvement
- The therapist display empathy and unconditional positive regard
- Therapist's role is to remove the pressure of conditions of worth
- Clarification of feelings – express feelings about things
- Useful – moments reflection
- Allows the nature and the intensity of the feelings to become more obvious to the client
- More intellectual and less emotional
- Restatement of content

**Beyond Therapy to Personal Growth**

- On a continuum with other life experiences
A person who is living life to the fullest should always engage in more or less the same processes as occur in therapy.

Growth requires the same conditions as those needed for effective therapy.

Growth isn't a goal that's reached and then cast aside.

It's a way of living to be pursued throughout your lifetime.

**Self actualisation and self determination: problems and prospects**

- Emphasis on the uniqueness and validity of each person's experience.
- Feels comfortable and commonsensical to many.
- Represents an optimistic and positive view of human nature.
- Emphasizes the importance of fully appreciating your own life and maintaining close contact with your own feelings.
- Provides a strategy for living that many people have used to enrich their lives.
- Course corrections.
- One problem is a lack of precision.
- Actualisation occurs in different ways within different people.
- A quality that was just described as a virtue – it's optimistic, positive view of human nature.
- Characterizes this view as arbitrary, naive, sentimental, and romantic.
- That self actualization should be encouraged – carried to an extreme, that everyone should live life to fullest, regardless of the consequences for everyone else.
- Living honestly means confronting harsh reality and being able to rise above them – hard to do.
- The concept of free will – convenient fiction, an illusion that is misleading at best.

**Key Terms**

- Humanistic psychology
- Phenomenological
- Actualization
- Self-actualization
- Congruence
- Organismic valuing process
- Fully functioning person
- Positive regard
- Conditional positive regard
- Unconditional positive regard
- Conditional self-regard
- Precondition for acceptance
- Contingent self worth
- Self-determination
- Controlling aspect
- Informational aspect
- Introjected regulation
- Identified regulation
- Autonomy
- Self-concordant
- Reactance
- Self theorist
- Ideal self
- Actual self
- Incongruence
- Distortion of experience
- Self-handicapping
- Stereotype threat
- Disidentify
- Physiological
- Safety and security
- Love and belongingness
- Acceptance
- Appreciation
- Lower level need
- Higher level need
- Deficiency based motive
- Growth based motive
- Spontaneity
- Problem centered
- Transcendent self-actualisers
- Peak experience
- Transpersonal
- Flow
- Existential psychology
- Dasein
- Existential guilt
- Terror management
- Content analysis
- Q-sort
- Time competence
- Inner directed
- Competence
- Client-centered therapy
- Person-centered therapy
- Clarification of feelings
Personality Psychology Week 10 Chapter 9 Glossary: Self-Actualisation and Self-Determination

Actual self:
• Yourself as you presently view it.

Actualisation:
• The tendency to grow in ways that maintain or enhance the organism.

Clarification of feelings:
• The procedure in which a therapist restates a client's expressed feelings.

Client-centered or person-centered therapy:
• A type of therapy that removes conditions of worth and has clients examine their feelings and take personal responsibility for their improvement.

Conditional positive regard:
• Affection that's given only under certain conditions.

Conditional self-regard:
• Self-acceptance that's given only under certain conditions.

Conditions of worth:
• Contingencies placed on positive regard.

Congruence:
• An integration within the self and a coherence between yourself and your experiences.

Content analysis:
• The grouping and counting of various categories of statements in an interview.

Contingent self-worth:
• Self-acceptance that's based on performance in some domain of life.
Dasein:
- "being in the world" the totality of your autonomous personal existence.

Deficiency-based motives:
- Motives reflecting a lack within the person that needs to be filled.

Existential guilt:
- A sense of guilt over failing to fulfill all of your possibilities.

Existential psychology:
- The view that people are responsible for investing their lives with meaning.

Flow:
- The experience of being immersed completely in an activity.

Fully functioning person:
- As person who'd open to life's experiences and who is self-actualising.

Growth-based motives:
- Motives reflecting the desire to extend and elaborate yourself.

Humanistic psychology:
- A branch of psychology emphasizing the universal capacity for personal growth.

Ideal self:
- Your perception of how you'd like to be.

Organismic valuing process:
- The internal signal that indicates whether self-actualisation is occurring.

Peak experience:
- A subjective experience of intense self-actualisation.

Person-centered therapy:
- See client-centered therapy.

Phenomenological:
• A view that emphasises the importance of your own personal experiences.

Positive regard:
• Acceptance and affection.

Q-sort:
• An assessment technique in which you sort descriptors according to how much they apply to you.

Reactance:
• A motive to regain or reassert a freedom that's been threatened.

Restatement of content:
• A procedure in which a therapist rephrases the ideas expressed by a client.

Self-actualization:
• A process of growing in ways that maintain or enhance the self.

Self-concordance:
• Pursuing goals that are consistent with your core values.

Self-determination:
• Deciding for yourself what to do.

Self-handicapping:
• Creating situations that make it hard to succeed, thus enabling avoidance of self-blame for failure.

Stereotype threat:
• Having a negative perception of the self because of feeling prejudged.

Transcendent self-actualisers:
• People whose actualisation goes beyond the self to become more universal.

Unconditional positive regard:
• Acceptance and affection with "no strings attached".

**PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY – THE LEARNING PERSPECTIVE**
Personality Psychology Week 9 Chapter 8 Summary: The Learning Perspective

- Conditioning approaches emphasizes two types of learning.
- In classical conditioning, a neutral stimulus (CS) is presented along with another stimulus (US) that already elicits a reflexive response (UR).
- After repeated pairings the CS itself comes to elicit a response (CR) that's similar to the UR.
- The CR appears to be an anticipatory response that prepares for the US.
- This basic phenomenon is modified by discrimination (different stimuli leading to similar responses).
- CRs fade if the CS is presented repeatedly without the US, a process termed extinction.
- Classical conditioning is important to personality primarily when the responses being conditioned are emotional reactions (emotional conditioning).
- Classical conditioning thus provides a basis for understanding people's unique preferences and aversions, and it provides a way of analyzing certain psychological problems, such as phobias.
- In instrumental conditioning, a behavior is followed by an outcome that's either positively valued or aversive.
- If the outcome is positively valued, the tendency to perform the behavior is reduced.
- Discrimination in instrumental conditioning means responding in different ways to different situational cues; generalizing is responding in a similar way to different cues; extinction is the reduction of a behavioral tendency through non reinforcement of the behavior.
- Reinforcers can occur in many patterns, termed schedules.
- An important effect of variations in reinforcement schedules is that behavior is learned by intermittent (partial) reinforcement is more persistent (under later conditions of non reinforcement) than is a behavior learned by continuous reinforcement.
- Another generation of learning theories has evolved.
- They are called cognitive because they emphasize the role of thought processes in behavior and social because they emphasize the idea that people often learn from one another.
- Several aspects of these theories represent elaborations on conditioning principles, including an emphasis on social reinforcement (rather than other sorts of reinforcement) in shaping behavior.
- Because humans have the capability for empathy (vicariously aroused emotions), we can experience classical conditioning vicariously.
- We can also experience reinforcement and punishment vicariously, causing shifts in action tendencies on the basis of someone else's outcomes.
- This view also holds that humans often learn expectancies and then apply them to new situations.
- The idea that expectancies about outcomes play an important part in determining behavior is a central part of social-cognitive learning models.
- Another important idea is that perceptions of personal efficacy determine whether a person will persist when in stressful circumstances.
- One part of this approach to personality stands as distinct from conditioning principles: the process of acquiring behavior potentials through observational learning.
- This process requires that an observer attend to a model (who is displaying a behavior), retain some memory of what was done (usually a visual or verbal memory), and have component skills to be able to reproduce what was modelled.