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Chapter

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## **CHAPTER 13**

ROGERS'S PERSON-  
CENTERED THEORY

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## Chapter

### The Master Motive: Self-Actualizing Tendency

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- **Self-actualizing tendency:** active, controlling drive toward fulfillment of our potentials that enables us to maintain and enhance ourselves

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## Personality Development

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- Valuing processing in infants: infants engage in an **organismic valuing process**, in which they use their actualization tendency as a criterion in making judgments about the worth of a given experience
- **The fully-functioning person:** if people are able to utilize their organismic valuing processes fully, they will inevitably begin to experience personal growth and movement toward realization of their potentials; fully functioning people are self-actualizing people
- Characteristics of fully functioning people include:
  - Openness to experience
  - Existential living
  - Trust of their organisms
  - Creativity
  - Leading an enriched life

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## Personality Development (cont'd.)

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- **Emerging persons:** people of the future whose interpersonal relationships are characterized by honesty, cooperation, and concern for others; they avoid sham, facades, and hypocrisy; they welcome change and opt for growth even when it is painful to do so
- Emerging people are characterized by:
  - Honesty and openness
  - An indifference to material possessions
  - Caring for others
  - A deep mistrust of cognitively-based science
  - A trust of their own experience and a profound mistrust of all external authority
  - Courage to change

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### The Social Self and the True Self

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- **Social self:** self-concept based largely on the expectations of others
  - We have a strong **need for positive regard** and want to please others
- **True self:** self-concept based on our actual feelings about our experiences
  - **Conditions of worth:** stipulations upon which our sense of self-worth depends; belief that we are only worthwhile if we perform behaviors that others think are good and refrain from actions that others think are bad

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### The Social Self and the True Self (cont'd.)

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- Ideal condition for development of a healthy self-concept and movement toward becoming fully functioning is **unconditional positive regard**: deep and genuine caring by others, uncontaminated by judgments or evaluations of our thoughts, feelings, or behaviors
  - **Congruence**: state of harmony that exists when there is no discrepancy between the person's experiencing and his or her self-concept

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## Assessment Techniques

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- **Q-Sort:** self-report procedure designed to measure the discrepancy between a persons actual and ideal self

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## Theory's Implications for Therapy

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- Therapeutic conditions that facilitate growth
  - Client and therapist are in psychological contact
  - Client is in a state of incongruence
  - Therapist is congruent
  - Therapist experiences unconditional positive regard for the client
  - Therapist experiences an empathic understanding of the client's internal frame of reference
  - Client perceives the therapist's unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding

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## Theory's Implications for Education

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- According to Rogers, the educational establishment is authoritarian and bases its program on a number of faulty assumptions:
  - Students cannot be trusted to pursue their own educational goals
  - Creative people develop from passive learners
  - Evaluation is education; education is evaluation
- Rogers's recommendations to counter this nonproductive orientation:
  - Students should be able to choose their own goals and to pursue them with the help and encouragement of faculty

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## Theory's Implications for Marriage

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- According to Rogers, marriage is a failing institution
  - He opposed traditional marriage, in which the husband is the ultimate authority and the wife occupies a more subservient role
- Rogers' recommendations for a healthy marriage:
  - Difficulties between the partners are discussed openly
  - Communication is honest and authentic, with mutual listening
  - Partners appreciate the value of separateness
  - Women's growing independence is valued
  - Roles and role expectations fade away, replaced by people making their own choices about their behavior
  - Either partner may form satellite relationships, which are relationships formed outside the marriage that may or may not involve sexual intimacy

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## Evaluative Comments

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- **Comprehensiveness:** increasingly broad in scope
- **Precision and testability:** hard-earned precision and adequate testability
- **Parsimony:** fails to meet the parsimony criterion; too simplistic
- **Empirical validity:** empirical support is generally supportive
- **Heuristic value:** theory has been very stimulating and provocative to clinicians, counselors, and researchers in a number of disciplines; strong heuristic value
- **Applied value:** strong applied value in education, race relations, family relationships, leadership, and counseling