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# **PSY1102**

## **Introduction to Applied Psychology**

### **Class 13**

### **Personality (continued)**

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# Agenda for today

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1. Humanistic perspective
  - a. Maslow's self-actualizing person
  - b. Rogers' person-centred perspective
  - c. Assessing the self
  - d. Evaluating the humanistic perspective
2. Trait perspective
  - a. Traits and types
  - b. Exploring traits
  - c. Assessing traits
  - d. The Big Five factors
  - e. Evaluating the trait perspective

# 1. Humanistic perspective

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- We have seen that the Psychoanalytic view of personality typically involved interpretation of unconscious memories and other concepts that were difficult to verify.
- Against this, John Watson, followed by B.F. Skinner, proposed a Behaviourist approach, which effectively denied the existence of anything that was not observable. In effect, the organism was a “black box” whose observable actions could be studied.
  - Behaviours could be observed and studied;
  - Motivations, thoughts, feelings, etc. were not observable;
  - In this sense, Behaviourism is a mechanistic view.

# 1. Humanistic perspective (continued)

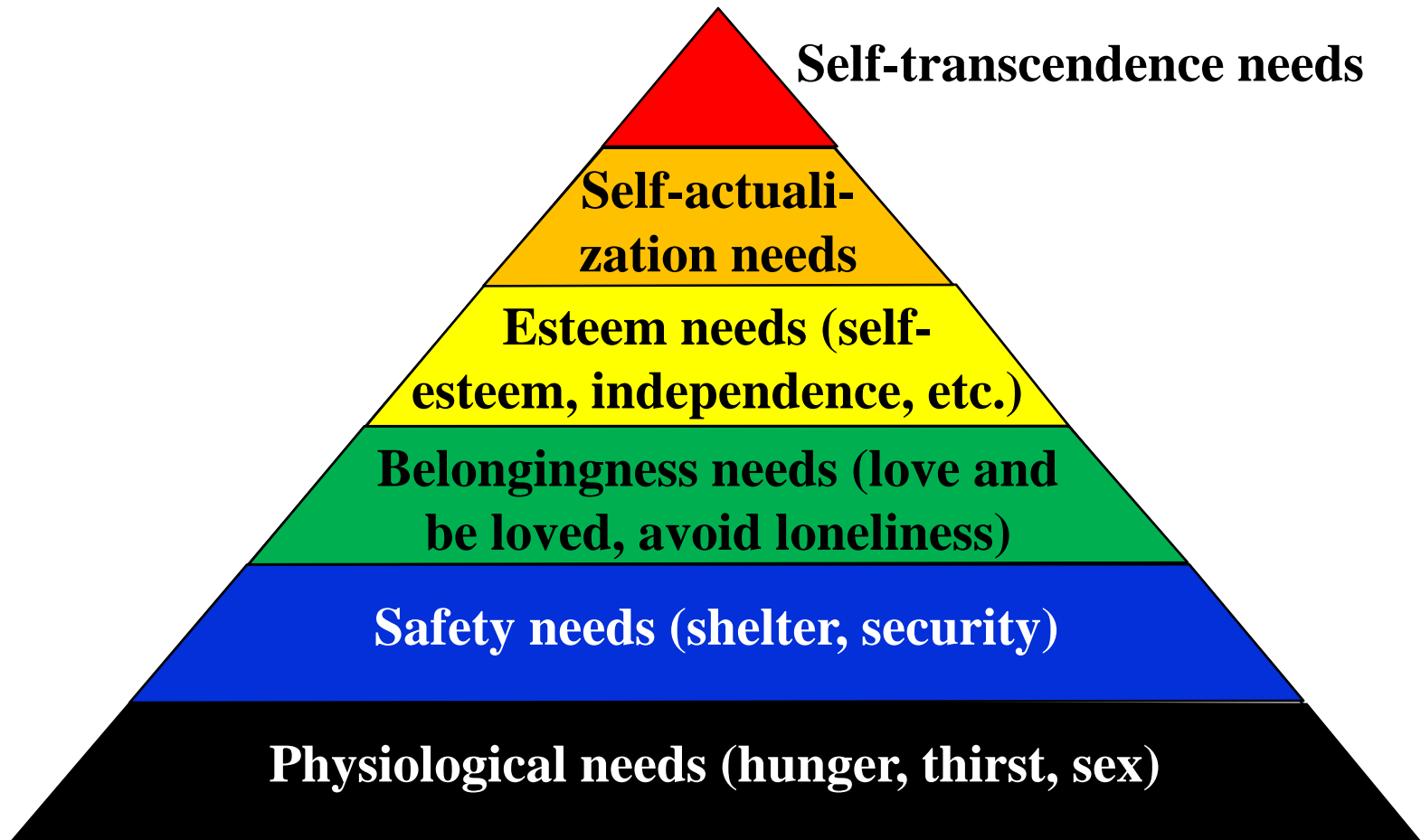
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- In the 1960s, a new view – the humanistic perspective – emerged, focusing on how the personalities of healthy people develop.
- We will examine the thinking of two humanistic thinkers who focused on the development of human potential, and who we will consider in turn:
  - Abraham Maslow, and
  - Carl Rogers.

## 1a. Maslow's self-actualizing perspective

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- Maslow proposed a hierarchy of needs, including 6 sets of needs from basic biology to needs that are solely human.



## 1a. Maslow's self-actualizing perspective (cont'd.)

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- In Maslow's system, humans do not strive to satisfy upper-level needs until more fundamental needs (those lower on the scale) have been satisfied.
  - For example, we do not strive to meet esteem needs until we are no longer hungry.
  - By implication, a person's basic needs must be met before she or he can lift the away from short-term goals and focus on longer-term objectives.
- One difference between Maslow's system and that of others is that Maslow studied “normal” people rather than those seeking help.
  - His notion of self-actualization is based on study of Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Thomas Jefferson. (Does this imply a cultural bias?)

## 1b. Rogers' person-centred perspective

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- Rogers, who largely agreed with Maslow, believed that people are fundamentally good and are primed to strive for self-actualization, analogous to the way that our genetic make-up primes us to grow to a certain height.
- As is the case with height, personality development can be stunted by environmental factors.
- He proposed that three conditions were required for healthy personal growth:
  - Genuineness;
  - Acceptance; and
  - Empathy.

## 1b. Rogers' perspective: genuineness

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- Although we can point to many cases where people are dishonest or deceptive, in Rogers' view our personal growth is fostered when other people are genuine – that is, when:
  - They are open about their feelings;
  - They share information about themselves; and
  - They drop the facades that we all use to confront the world.

Comments?

To what extent do you make use of one or more facades?



## 1b. Rogers' perspective: acceptance

- In Rogers' view our personal growth is fostered when other people are accepting – that is, when they offer us unconditional positive regard.
- Here, it is important to acknowledge the difference between the behaviour and the person. According to Rogers, it's okay to disapprove of the behaviour, but not the person.
- Unconditional positive regard is an acknowledgment of the value of a human being.
- Being in a relationship where there is mutual regard permits you to drop your pretenses, knowing that you'll be valued for being who you are.

Comments?

e.g., do you see Whitney Houston as a person or an addict?

## 1b. Rogers' perspective: empathy

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- Unlike sympathy, where one (for example) offers condolences “from a distance”, empathy is an active sharing of the feelings of another person. For example, suppose a demonstrator is killed in a protest against the government:
  - We might sympathise with the person's views and feel sorrow that the person has died; or
  - If we can truly imagine the grief of the demonstrator's family and friends, or if we truly comprehend the impact of the loss of a human life, we empathise.

## 1b. Thoughts on empathy



Kent State University massacre, 1970.

Tin soldiers and Nixon coming,  
We're finally on our own.  
This summer I hear the drumming,  
Four dead in Ohio.

Gotta get down to it  
Soldiers are gunning us down  
Should have been done long ago.  
What if you knew her  
And found her dead on the ground  
How can you run when you know?

- *Ohio*, by Neil Young

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnOoNM0U6oc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnOoNM0U6oc)

One death is a tragedy, a million is a statistic.

- *Josef Stalin*

## 1b. Rogers' perspective: empathy (continued)

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- Empathy that we truly listen to the other person to understand their feelings.
- For example, in today's news we hear about the plight of the people living in Attawapiskat, a native reserve where many of the homes are uninhabitable because of mould and other chronic problems.
  - Some of the residents are living in shacks, tents, or unheated trailers in the winter;
  - Conditions include: no running water, no indoor plumbing, no access to electricity ([www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2011/12/01/attawapiskat-thursday.html](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2011/12/01/attawapiskat-thursday.html)).

What is our reaction to this story?  
Do we sympathise, empathise, or neither?

## 1b. Rogers' perspective: the self-concept

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- Central to Rogers' perspective is the idea of the self-concept, which – expressed briefly – is how we describe ourselves to ourself.
- Rogers believed that we have an ideal self, our view of who we should be.
- Our self-concept is, in effect, how we view our actual self in comparison to our ideal self.
- If we have a negative self-concept, we feel dissatisfied and unhappy; in short, we do not measure up to our ideal.
- If we have a positive self-concept, we see the world more positively.

## 1c. Assessing the self

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- The assessment of personality is a constant challenge.
- Rogers asked people to describe their ideal self and their actual self – that is, “what would you ideally like to be?” and “who are you, actually?”
  - When these two views are close together, the self-concept is positive.
  - Also, having these two “benchmarks” permitted him to estimate progress in therapy.
- A contrary humanistic view is that any standardised assessment of personality is depersonalising.
  - “People are more than an item on a questionnaire.”
  - By implication, a more intimate relationship – intimate, not sexual – provides a better view of a human. You can see some similarities here to psychoanalysis, but without some baggage.

## 1d. Evaluating the humanistic perspective

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- How has the humanistic perspective influenced Psychology?
- Overall, there have been two types of influences:
  - Like the Freudian approach, the humanistic perspective has provided a different view of the definition of a “person”.
  - Unfortunately, the humanistic view has also led to simplistic “pop psychology” views.
- However, humanistic concepts are largely subjective, and may be seen to represent the personal views of the humanistic theorist rather than objective concepts.

## 1d. Evaluating the humanistic perspective (cont'd.)

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- Also, critics have bewailed the individualism that some people believe is encouraged by humanism.
  - These critics see humanism as leading to self-indulgence and selfishness – as typified by the “me generation” – as well as looser moral constraints which are based more on subjective (personal) standards rather than conformity to social norms.
- Finally, some critics see humanistic psychology as naive. Rather than seeing humans as basically good, these critics point to the human potential to do evil things, or to avoid doing good things.
- On balance, humanistic psychology presents a positive message for persons, but appears to need to confront the “dark side” of humanity more seriously.



## 2. Trait perspective

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- Much of the “personality” material we’ve considered looks at the person as a unitary item. This can be considered a top-down approach.
- By contrast, the trait perspective sees the person as a group of traits, or “components”, that together make up the person. This can be considered a bottom-up approach.
- The trait perspective was developed by Gordon Allport, who tried to describe human personality in terms of traits or characteristics. A trait can be:
  - a behaviour, or
  - a motive.
- Allport’s intent was to describe traits, not to explain them.

## 2a. Traits and types

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- For some reason, the textbook combines traits and types.
- In contrast to traits, the personality type perspective uses a top-down approach, but with some acknowledgment of components.
- The primary approach to personality types uses the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) as a tool to sort people.
  - This tool is standardised, available in different languages, and used for counselling, leadership training, and workplace teams.

## 2a. Personality types: Myers-Briggs

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- The development of the Myers-Briggs test was based on Carl Jung's book *Psychological Types*.
- Jung posited an introvert – extravert axis and proposed two dichotomous pairs of cognitive functions:
  - Rational (judging) functions, including thinking and feeling; and
  - Irrational (perceiving) functions (sensing and intuition).
- Myers and Briggs created four sets of dichotomies, which create ( $2^4 =$ ) 16 combinations of traits, or 16 “types”:

Extraversion (E) – (I) Introversion

Sensing (S) – (N) Intuition

Thinking (T) – (F) Feeling

Judgment (J) – (P) Perception

## 2a. Personality types: Myers-Briggs (continued)

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- To be rated on one of these scales, people answer questions about themselves, such as:
  - “Do you usually value sentiment more than logic, or value logic more than sentiment?”
- This feeds into the T-F (thinking-feeling) dichotomy.
- Feedback is given to the person after the test, and the feedback is always affirmative.
- Although the people rated on this tool may agree with the rating, the scientific value of the test remains unproven.

## 2b. Exploring traits

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- Let's consider an example: You have been asked to list the characteristics you are looking for in a perfect mate – your “partner specification”. In so doing, you are asked to list attributes in three categories:
  - Must have
  - Should have
  - Must not have
- By implication, items not listed are not important to you.
- How many items are in each category?

## 2b. Exploring traits (continued)

- Below, several examples of attributes are listed:

Gender	Skin colour	Cheats at cards
Age	Nationality	Cheats on taxes
Eye colour	Physical fitness	Attitude about gun
Hair colour	Blood type	ownership
Sexual orientation	HIV status	Desire to have
Religion	Smoking status	children
Height	Use of illegal drugs	Belief that aliens are
Weight	Use of alcohol	among us
Level of education	Political affiliation	Attitude towards
Literacy	Belief in astrology	gender equality
Native language	Use of seat belt	Willingness to donate
Purchases lottery	Fear of elevators	kidney to brother
tickets	Won't live anywhere	Hates vegetables
	with 13 in address	

## 2b. Exploring traits: factor analysis

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- Given the complexity of a human being, how can we hope to describe a person in a finite amount of words (and time)?
- Factor analysis – which we encountered when discussing intelligence – is a tool that looks for clusters of attributes.
- The Eysencks, among others, believed that many of these attributes grouped into meaningful clusters. They proposed a few axes, including introversion – extraversion and emotional stability – instability. (See text, p. 569.)
- Administering the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire to diverse people in 35 countries, these dimensions emerged from the factor analysis as basic personality dimensions.
- Moreover, these factors appear to be genetically influenced.

## 2b. Exploring traits: biology and personality

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- More recently, we have been able to measure various types of brain activity and neurochemical influences to try to find biological correlates of personality.
- As noted in the textbook (pp. 569-570):
  - Extraverts seek stimulation because their normal level of brain arousal is low. Specifically, positron emission tomography (PET) scans have shown that the activity of a frontal lobe area related to the inhibition of behaviour is more active in introverts.
  - Also, dopamine-related activity is higher in extraverts.
  - The reactivity of our autonomic nervous system is lower in curious people than in fearful or anxious ones.
  - Some of the biological differences found in humans seem to have correlates in other species of mammal and bird,



## 2c. Assessing traits

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- Traits are assessed by personality inventories, which are long questionnaires designed to assess several traits at once.
- The MMPI is the granddaddy of personality inventories. The strength of the MMPI is that its test items were empirically derived – that is, they are backed by research. These items were then groups into 10 clinical scales, which assess things such as:
  - Masculinity – femininity
  - Introversion – extraversion
- Personality inventories are scored objectively, which means that no interpretation is required (unlike psychoanalysis, for example).
- Unfortunately, objective scoring does not mean that the score is necessarily valid.

## 2d. The Big Five factors

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- The Eysencks' two factors (extraversion – introversion and emotional stability) have been modified and expanded to create the Big Five. These five dimensions (whose acronym is CANOE) are:
  - Conscientiousness;
  - Agreeableness;
  - Neuroticism (emotional stability vs. instability);
  - Openness; and
  - Extraversion.
- These dimensions seem to cross cultures and geography (56 nations, 29 languages).

## 2d. Research on the Big Five factors

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- Are the Big Five stable?
  - Stable in adulthood, although some changes in one direction or another. Conscientiousness rises in the 20s, Agreeableness in the 30s.
- Are the Big Five heritable?
  - Heritability generally around 50%, similar in different nations.
- Do the Big Five have predictive value?
  - Yes. Highly conscientious people earn better grades in higher education and are “morning people”.
  - Evening people are marginally more extraverted.
  - Marital and sexual satisfaction may suffer in cases where partners score differently on agreeableness, stability, and openness.

## 2e. Evaluating the trait perspective

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- Are personality traits consistent across time and situations? One of the key considerations is the person-situation controversy – to what extent is the person constant across different situations?
- Specifically, what characteristics are constant across situations for a specific individual?
- Personality traits become more stable with age (see chart, p. 574), with a correlation across years of about 0.65 at age 30 and about 0.75 at 50-70 years of age.
- However, our specific behaviours may change from one situation to another. In other words, although our personality may be relatively constant, our actions are not as constant. Therefore, personality tests do not predict behaviours well.

## 2e. Evaluating the trait perspective (continued)

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- For fun (not for the midterm), check out the correlations (page 575) related to:
  - Music preferences (e.g., jazz vs. country);
  - Dorm rooms and office “clutter”;
  - Personal Web sites;
  - e-mail.

# Summary: Class 13

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