

Term paper on humanistic and biological approaches to personality

[Law](#), [Security](#)



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Humanistic and Biological Approaches to Personality

Introduction

Personality refers to the characteristic aspects of an individual both internally and externally. Internal factors refer to the motives, feelings, perceptions and attitudes of an individual while the external factors refer to bodily actions, speech, gestures and habits. In looking at these features, there has to be an element of consistency in the personality traits. In a given situation there is the way an individual would react and it is commonly known by peers and family.

Maslow Personality Theory

Maslow introduced a hierarchy of needs which he argued influenced a person's personality. In the first hierarchy an individual is concerned with fulfilling his physiological needs of shelter, clothing and food. Once an

individual fulfils these needs he now concentrates of fulfilling needs in the second hierarchy which are known as security needs. The individual wants to feel secure and loved. Once these needs are addressed the individual moves to fulfil the third hierarchy of needs which are needs for love, family, sexual intimacy and a sense of belonging. In the higher hierarchy of needs the individual has esteem needs where he requires having the respect of others and being loved.

At a lower level there are those who will seek fame, status and recognition. At the higher level the individual seeks self-confidence, mastery and competence. Once an individual has fulfilled these needs he moves to fulfil the highest level of needs which are self-actualisation needs. At this stage the individual seeks to be all that he can be in his profession and get a sense of self-actualisation. According to the hierarchy of needs an individual goes through different growth stages as he seeks to fulfil the needs.

An individual starts with a weak personality which develops or grows with his ability and opportunity to fulfil his hierarchical needs. In the first level the individual has an awareness of his physical needs and seeks gratification. As someone seeks to fulfil security needs, they have feelings of insecurity and inferiority. At the third level of needs, if a person has unfilled needs, he usually feels isolated and estranged from others. Fulfilling the love needs helps him overcome feelings of loneliness.

Looking at the esteem needs, the individual may feel powerless, overlooked and not needed by others in life situations. He may also feel incompetent or substandard. At this place he is seeking the respect and consideration of others. At the highest level, at the need of self-actualisation, the individual

feels uneasy all the time as if he lacks something. The person is constantly on edge, agitated or strained till he gets self-achievement. He knows that he is actually doing what he was born to do. Maslow believed that one would be able to grow and move from one hierarchy of needs to another unless there are blockages placed by society such as access to education.

Biological Factors Affecting Personality

There are several biological factors that affect the personality of an individual. The first one is the environment where the individual is. If a child grew up in an environment where there is security, affection and warmth the individual grows up being a self-confident, stable individual. However where the individual grows up in a home that has a high level of criticism and rejection, the child grows up being submissive, insecure with high adjustment issues.

This theory places a lot of weight on the rearing pattern of patterns and the influence it has on the baby (Magnavita, 2002, p 179). The kind of homes that an individual grows in also matters. The social class that a child is born into also influences its personality. Children born in low-income families may grow up with an attitude that they cannot do anything to change their environment and situation. It is given, something akin to fate. Their parents are not able to build a high level of motivation for achievement and independence. The children born in middle class families are shown that they have the power of decision-making in their lives and self-direction. They are confident as they know they are able to influence their future life. The kind of family one grows in is another important factor.

Children in nuclear families are usually self-centred and introverts while children who have grown in extended families are accommodating and extroverts. As the child grows, he interacts with siblings, peers, neighbourhood, school and even mass media. All this goes towards moulding the individual to possess the traits or personality that he has now.

Secondly the genetic makeup of an individual affects their personality.

Studies have been done on children who are separated at birth and raised in different homes and it is found that they have the same personality due to hereditary causes. The child therefore bears a tendency or propensity to act in a certain way (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2007, p 47).

Maslow Hierarchy of Needs Verses Biological Approaches

Differences in the Two Approaches

There are several differences between humanistic and biological approaches to understanding and describing personalities. In humanistic approach it considers the individual

and his present state. It does not consider the person's past and future. It is about what needs the individual seeks to fulfil now. Biological factors that affect the personality such as genetics are things that an individual cannot change. The determinants of his or her personality type are in the genes.

Maslow assumes that an individual will desire to change his needs in order to become a better person. There are people who are complacent with the environment they grew up in and they will never seek for an improvement of their personality.

In biological approach what someone can achieve depends on their genes for example leadership while in humanistic approach, what one achieves depends on how one views himself, self-esteem and confidence. According to Maslow, child upbringing cannot hinder self-actualisation while in biological approach; child upbringing affects the self-confidence of an individual in pursuing self-achievement. Maslow spoke of a hierarchy of needs where an individual seeks to ultimately be at place of self-actualisation while the biological theorists look at personality formation from the time the child is born. Biological approaches incorporate the past while considering the personality of the individual. They tend to be more holistic than humanistic approaches.

Similarities between the Two Approaches

The similarity between the Maslow's hierarchical theory and the biological theory is both the biological and humanistic approaches tend to look of the weaknesses in one's personality and the causes for the weakness. An example is in a situation where an individual is not in a secure environment there are weaknesses in the person's personality such as inferiority or insecurity. According to Maslow it is because of the level of need fulfilment he is operating from while in the biological approach it is upbringing.

Conclusion

The study of personality has been done for a number of years as people seek to find out why people behave differently from each other. Several scholars have conducted research and found out that the difference in personality

arises genetically or upbringing or the needs an individual has such as self-esteem, power and self-actualisation.

References:

Magnavita, J. (2002). Theories of personality: Contemporary approaches to the science of personality. US: John Wiley & Sons.

Chamorro-Premuzic, T. (2007). Personality and individual differences. USA: Blackwell Publishing.