

Curious About Behaviour

Curated by David F Marks

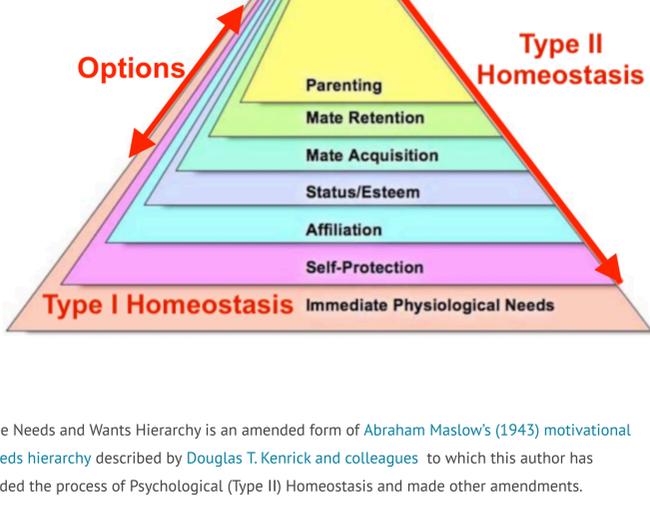
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The General Theory of Behaviour III: Restructured Hierarchy of Needs and Wants

dfmarks · June 2, 2020

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The Needs and Wants Hierarchy is an amended form of Abraham Maslow's (1943) motivational needs hierarchy described by Douglas T. Kenrick and colleagues to which this author has added the process of Psychological (Type II) Homeostasis and made other amendments.

The theory of motivation is a fundamental building block of the entire GTB. It describes how the two types of homeostasis, Physiological and Psychological, complement one other in providing the general theory of behaviour. The division of labour between the two types of homeostasis is presented in the diagram at the top of this post.

Modifying Maslow

Abraham Harold Maslow (April 1, 1908 – June 8, 1970) was best known for the foundation of humanistic psychology and Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

A brief introduction to Maslow's needs hierarchy is here.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was a landmark publication for its ability to account for so many aspects of behaviour. The first level of the original Maslow hierarchy – Immediate Physiological Needs – already incorporates homeostasis (Type I).

Psychological Homeostasis (homeostasis Type II) has been inserted to give the hierarchy more explanatory power.

In discussing the second level for "Safety Needs", Maslow states:

"The safety needs.—If the physiological needs are relatively well gratified, there then emerges a new set of needs, which we may categorize roughly as the safety needs. All that has been said of the physiological needs is equally true, although in lesser degree, of these desires. The organism may equally well be wholly dominated by them. They may serve as the almost exclusive organizers of behaviour, recruiting all the capacities of the organism in their service, and we may then fairly describe the whole organism as a safety-seeking mechanism." (p.376).

In describing this in detail, Maslow turned to the needs of children for a predictable, orderly world, a world which is reliable, safe and predictable:

"Another indication of the child's need for safety is his preference for some kind of undisrupted routine or rhythm. He seems to want a predictable, orderly world. For instance, injustice, unfairness, or inconsistency in the parents seems to make a child feel anxious and unsafe. This attitude may be not so much because of the injustice per se or any particular pains involved, but rather because this treatment threatens to make the world look unreliable, or unsafe, or unpredictable. Young children seem to thrive better under a system which has at least a skeletal outline of rigidity, in which there is a schedule of a kind, some sort of routine, something that can be counted upon, not only for the present but also far into the future. Perhaps one could express this more accurately by saying that the child needs an organized world rather than an unorganized or unstructured one." (p. 377)

Maslow specifically links safety with 'stability':

"we can perceive the expressions of safety needs only in such phenomena as, for instance, the common preference for a job with tenure and protection, the desire for a savings account, and for insurance of various kinds (medical, dental, unemployment, disability, old age). Other broader aspects of the attempt to seek safety and stability in the world are seen in the very common preference for familiar rather than unfamiliar things, or for the known rather than the unknown."(p. 379).

Maslow's bracketing of safety with stability connects the needs pyramid with Type II homeostasis. It is noted that, in the amended pyramid, "Safety Needs" has been relabelled as "Self-Protection". Thus all motives above level I are part and parcel of the striving for stability and equilibrium that is the function of homeostasis Type II. (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The Hierarchy of Human Motives, Needs and Wants. This figure integrates ideas from life-history development with Maslow's hierarchy. Type I homeostasis operates at level 1. All motives from level 2 and above engage Type II homeostasis. The 'mate acquisition', 'mate retention' and 'parenting' goals are viewed as optional and may be decided by personal choice. These optional goals overlap with, rather than replace, earlier developing systems, or they may not be selected at all. Level 3 is concerned with affiliation and identity and crucial to the wants and needs in the levels above. This figure is adapted from a figure published originally by Kenrick, Griskevicius, Neuberg and Schaller (2010).

Principle II (Needs and Wants Hierarchy)

The newly amended Hierarchy leads to Principle II (Needs Hierarchy) of the GTB, which states:

GTB Principle II (Needs Hierarchy): In the hierarchy of needs, Physiological Homeostasis Type I is active at level I (Immediate Physiological Needs) and Psychological Homeostasis Type II is active at all higher levels from II (Self-Protection) to level VI (Parenting).

As priorities shift from lower to higher in the hierarchy we see a progression in developmental priority as each individual matures. In fact, it is possible to apply the motivational hierarchy at three different levels of analysis: evolutionary function, developmental sequencing, and current cognitive priority (the proximate level). In agreement with Douglas T. Kenrick et al. (2010), the basic foundational structure of Maslow's pyramid, buttressed with a few architectural extensions, remains perfectly valid. Need satisfaction is allowed to be a goal at more than one level simultaneously. In light of the amended pyramid, three auxiliary propositions are stated as follows:

Individuals unable to meet their immediate physiological needs at level I of the hierarchy are at a disadvantage in meeting needs at higher levels in the hierarchy. [Auxiliary Proposition, AP, 004].

People with unmet needs for self-protection (level 2) are at a disadvantage in meeting their needs for affiliation (level 3). [AP 005].

In general, people with higher than average unmet needs at any level (n) are at a disadvantage in meeting higher level needs at levels n+m. [AP 006].

The universality of Abraham Maslow's original needs hierarchy is supported by a survey of well-being across 123 countries. Louis Tay and Ed Diener (2011) examined the fulfilment of needs and subjective well-being (SWB), including life evaluation, positive feelings, and negative feelings.[2] Need fulfilment was consistently associated with SWB across all world regions. Type II homeostasis defined within the General Theory provides a close fit to the natural striving of conscious organisms for security, stability and well-being, described in later chapters. The needs hierarchy amended by Douglas T. Kenrick et al. (2010) is expected to be a close fit to nature.

CONCLUSIONS:

- 1) Behaviour is at root an expression of Psychological (Type II) Homeostasis.
- 2) The 'Reset Equilibrium Function' (REF) operates in all conscious organisms with purpose, desire and intentionality. When equilibrium is disturbed, the REF strives to reset psychological processes to equilibrium.
- 3) In the hierarchy of needs, Type I Homeostasis strives to satisfy Physiological Needs at level 1. Type II Homeostasis strives to satisfy developmental needs and wants at levels 2- 7, some of which are optional and determined by affiliation and identity needs at level 3.

Reference

Kenrick, D. T., Griskevicius, V., Neuberg, S. L., & Schaller, M. (2010). Renovating the pyramid of needs: Contemporary extensions built upon ancient foundations. *Perspectives on psychological science*, 5(3), 292-314.

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