

Basic Needs and Fulfilling Human Potential

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Abstract

Maslow spends a great deal of thinking and writing about human fulfillment, including reaching one's potential. After studying exemplars in literature and biography, as well as personal acquaintances, he described the nature of "self-actualization." The assumption of basic needs fulfillment is that one can then focus on self-actualization. We review his description and contrast the descriptions with our ancestral context, small-band hunter-gatherer societies. Then we examine the human capabilities approach which also emphasizes adult needs. We suggest that meeting the needs of babies is fundamental to potentialities for self-actualization and human capabilities. Meeting the needs of babies means following the evolved nest for the young. To make this clear, we present a baby bill of rights.

Keywords

Self-actualization
Human capabilities
Evolved developmental niche
Baby bill of rights
Human potential

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In this chapter, we review the nature of self-actualization, as Abraham Maslow understood it, inserting our understanding of our change to "humanity's" ancestral context. Later we discuss an alternative view of basic needs, the human capabilities approach. Finally, we examine what is missing in both approaches—a focus on the very young and suggest how that might be remedied.

Maslow (1962) pointed to an essential human nature or inner core that is biologically based and intrinsic, unless frustrated or discouraged. "The more we learn about man's natural tendencies, the easier it will be to tell him how to be good, how to be happy, how to be fruitful, how to respect himself, how to love, how to fulfill his highest potentialities" (p. 4). This book aims to do this—provide some insight into evolved natural tendencies and the evolutionary design to fulfill them. Maslow went on to say that with this knowledge we could solve many personality problems. We agree.

In this book, we have expanded the notion of basic needs fulfillment beyond the typical list studied (e.g., belonging, esteem) to include aspects that are known to construct human neurobiology—the evolved developmental niche in childhood (e.g., affection, positive climate).¹ We have hypothesized that these components represent a species-typical developmental system for human beings and that early experience that falls outside of these components may be termed a species-atypical developmental system (Narvaez, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018a, 2018b, in press). Moreover, because of human malleability in early life, the characteristics of human nature that a species-typical system supports should vary from that of species-atypical systems. In Chapter 3, we showed that greater nest-consistent childhood experience was correlated with basic needs satisfaction in adulthood. In a way, the evolved nest provides another avenue into examining basic needs satisfaction, a magnifying glass to examine how basic needs are fulfilled. It is an

external set of components that then relate to the construction of a well-functioning or healthy person and the feeling of needs satisfaction.

We used Susan Fiske's (2004) BUCET list of basic needs (belonging, understanding, control, self-enhancement and trust). It should be noted that all of these are fostered at first in early life when children desire these needs fulfilled, propelling species-typical growth in a socially cooperative manner. One might think that understanding comes later but this is not the case. The child builds neurobiological narratives that subconsciously guide social relations and views of self and the world (Narvaez, 2011). add: --"are people trustworthy? Am I safe in this world?"

The BUCET list does not necessarily reflect the highest orientation that Maslow identified, self-actualization. Human fulfillment takes a lifetime to reach and it best starts out with supportive relationships and climate.

Human Fulfillment

~~"The thing to do seems to be to find out what you are really like inside, deep down, as a member of the human species and as a particular individual"~~ *"The thing to do seems to be to find out what you are really like inside, deep down, as a member of the human species and as a particular individual"* (Maslow, 1970, p. 4).

AQ1

Maslow's Notion of Self-Actualization

Abraham Maslow (1962, 1970, 1971) assumed that lower level basic needs would allow the individual to focus on higher forms of basic needs. Maslow noted that self-actualization was only visible in older adults because many of the lower basic needs were still being pursued by adolescents, young and middle-aged adults.²

Maslow called the process of reaching human potential self-actualization. Abraham Maslow g He gathered information about such people using interviews and historical analysis of a couple of dozen people he admired. He wrote about their characteristics in his books, *Motivation and Personality* (1970), *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1962), and *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (1971). He also was interviewed in the 1968 film, "Maslow and Self-Actualization."³ In the discussion below, we use these sources to describe the characteristics of self-actualizers.

We also compare Maslow's list of characteristics with our evolutionary baseline, a helpful way to see what is species-typical. That is, we use human genus history, specifically in our ancestral context (99% of human genus existence in small-band hunter-gatherer communities), as a measure against which to make judgments about what is normal for humans. In the 99% we provided the evolved developmental niche, the developmental system for supporting optimal development. Anthropologists and others have described groups in modern times that lived like our 99%—small-band hunter-gatherers (SBHG). We can examine and compare their outcomes to self-actualizing characteristics.

How do characteristics of self-actualizers align with those of our evolutionary heritage as represented by SBHG? Below we go through Maslow's terms/descriptions and note how they are (or not) related to our evolved developmental niche (EDN) and evolved community life. Native American communities have many of the characteristics of SBHG even if they were complex hunter-gatherers. So, we will refer to them as appropriate. Add to end of sentence:

A summary of references can be obtained from Narvaez (2013), Deloria (2006), Cooper (1998) and Fry (2006).

Cooper, T. (1998). *A time before deception: Truth in communication, culture, and ethics*. Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publications.

Deloria, V. (2006). *The world we used to live in*. Golden, Co: Fulcrum Publishing.

Narvaez, D. (2013). The 99%--Development and socialization within an evolutionary context: Growing up to become "A good and useful human being." In D. Frv (Ed.). War, peace and human nature: The convergence of evolutionary and cultural views (pp. 643-672). New York: Oxford University Press.

More Efficient Italicize these headers to make them stand out t **Perception** of Reality and More Comfortable Relations with It

Maslow points out that neurotic people (the unhealthy) actually do not perceive the world effectively or correctly—they are cognitively wrong about themselves and the world. Notice how this point emphasizes healthy development, that healthy development is *normal* for well raised human beings, *not* the **neuroticism** that **Freud** add after: (1933) ascribed to all human beings. From our examination of reports of those who are(were)⁴ raised and live(d) in our ancestral contexts, we concur: Neuroticism is not a universal human outcome.

From what can be discerned from SBHG **who provide the EDN**, EDN-raised individuals are less neurotic **and** change to "or" mixed up about how to live well, which we can see in societies that provide the evolved nest and do not traumatize their children (Narvaez, 2014, 2015, 2016). In these societies, who lived close to the earth, proper perception was required for survival. You would not last long without it.

Acceptance of Self, Others, Nature

Self-actualizing folks accept themselves and others as they are, without complaint or critique. They are not aggravated or threatened by difference. In the modern view, this is a sign of proper neurobiological development (lack of **stress reactivity**). For example, Maslow discusses how a self-actualized parent allows their children to blossom without interference or control. This is the usual way of raising children in small-band **hunter-gatherer communities**: (SBHG) around the world (Hewlett & Lamb, 2005). Parents and community members assume the child has his or her own spirit guiding development and that much harm can come from interfering.

Spontaneity: Simplicity, Naturalness

Self-actualizers are not conventional. Maslow wrote:

Their ease of penetration to reality, their closer approach to an animal-like or childlike acceptance and spontaneity imply a superior awareness of their own impulses, desires, opinions, and subjective reactions in general. Clinical study of this capacity confirms beyond a doubt the opinion, e.g., of Fromm that the average normal, well-adjusted person often has not the slightest idea of what he is, of what he wants, of what his own opinions are. (Maslow, 1970, pp. 158–159)

Among SBHG, spontaneity is dominant—there are no set roles or demands made on individuals. The band spends minimal time gathering and hunting—in which individuals can freely participate or not on any given day—and instead spends the majority of time socializing with banter, dancing, singing, and story-telling.

Problem Centered

Self-actualizing people are more problem centered than ego centered. They also live with a wider breadth of vision, a larger frame of reference that brings about a certain serenity in everyday affairs. Within this larger frame, they focus on a mission in life, driven by a sense of duty or obligation.

In our 99%, serenity is the norm, as calm neurobiological structures underpin personality. However, a higher purpose may or may not be characteristic in our ancestral context. Some groups don't worry about such things (e.g., Everett, 2009) while others do (Australian Aborigenes; Lawlor, 1991). In Native American communities a larger framing of life, an attachment to the cosmos and a respect for life forces are built into daily ritual and form part of the adolescent's vision quest and transition to adulthood (Deloria, 2006).

A Quality of Detachment and Need for Privacy and Autonomy, Will, Active Agency: Independent from Culture [and](#) fix spacing of this title

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Self-actualizing people are less needy of others, and of their approval than are the non-self-actualizing. They make their own decisions. They are independent, focused on growth rather than on getting a good reaction from the community. Self-actualizing individuals are nonconformist unlike deficiency-motivated people who need others and their approval. (Note that the assumption here is that non-actualizers care about fitting in. But these days in the USA, we have an increasing number of people and families that are socially oppositional—they purposefully behave in ways to annoy the community; Derber, 2013; Mooney & Young, 2006; Robinson & Murphy, 2008.)

Interestingly, though SBHG adults are highly autonomous—doing their own thing as they will, like going on a walkabout for a few days—they are also highly communal. They are committed to group living and democratically discuss actions and decisions when in the group, which has no leaders and does not use coercion.

Continued Freshness of Appreciation

Self-actualizing people appreciate the beauty and uniqueness of their experiences. They feel grateful for everyday miracles (e.g., sunsets). They have rich subjective experiences, even of the same events. They are emotionally present to life experience. Anthropological research suggests similar findings in preindustrialized societies. For example, among Australian Aborigines (Lawlor, 1991) this is clear as they sing their songlines day after day. Anthropologist Colin Turnbull (1962) described the “forest people” (Mbuti) as living in gratitude for the forest, which they treated like a beloved mother.

Common Mystic or Peak Experiences

According to Maslow, self-actualizers are more likely to have mystic experiences, “feelings of limitless horizons opening up to the vision, the feeling of being simultaneously more powerful and also more helpless than one ever was before, the feeling of great ecstasy and wonder and awe, the loss of placing in time and space with, finally, the conviction that something extremely important and valuable had happened, so that the subject is to some extent transformed and strengthened even in his daily life by such experiences” (Maslow, 1970, p. 164). There are also milder forms that are commonly experienced by most people. Maslow noted that some self-actualizers did not have peak experiences at all (“nonpeakers”). Nonpeakers were more practically focused and he thought more likely to be crusaders, reformers, politicians, or workers whereas the “peakers” were more likely to be in the arts (poets, composers), philosophy or religion. Within preindustrialized societies, group dancing, and ceremonies that lead to trance are routine (Turner, 1985).

Gemeinschaftsgefühl

Gemeinschaftsgefühl is a word invented by Alfred Adler and refers to a feeling of identification with, sympathy and affection for humanity, like an older brother has for a younger sibling. The self-actualizing person has this attitude toward others who cannot see the truths that are so clear to her.

The [wise](#) put this sentence into prior paragraph elders in Native American communities have been described with this type of insight and patience (but also exasperation) towards the lesser aware adult members of the community (Cooper, 1998; WindEagle & RainbowHawk, 2003).

Deeper Interpersonal Relations

Self-actualizers are capable of deeper relationships than others—greater love, fusion, and less ego boundedness. They tend to have only a small circle of friends, usually who are close to being self-actualizers themselves. Among those in our ancestral conditions, this is hard to determine as the topic is not the usual focus of study.

A Democratic Character Structure

Self-actualizers have a democratic character structure: they do not seek power over others but have a sense of equality with and empathy towards others of good character, no matter their background. They are ready to learn from their encounters with anyone. This contrasts with the authoritarian personality which at the very least involves an emphasis on submitting to authority, including its values and beliefs, and aggression toward targeted outsiders, and is related to social dominance (Altemeyer, 1998). Authoritarians respond to events motivated to keep their worldview intact through resistance to change, managing uncertainty and threat with the use of rigid scripts for social life (“rubricizing” according to Maslow, 1970). (For a review, see Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003).

SBHG societies are fiercely egalitarian. No one coerces another, even parents to children. It would be grounds for breaking off a relationship. Since they are not stress reactive, they would not easily shift into a self-protective mindset where authoritarianism seems good and right.

Discriminatory Between Means and Ends, Between Good and Evil

Self-actualizers are strongly ethical, and exhibit moral standards in their behavior, doing right and not doing wrong. They also enjoy the means as well as the ends. Similarly, SBHG expect others to share and not coerce others. They are known for their playfulness and enjoyment of everyday tasks.

A Philosophical, Unhostile Sense of Humor

The sense of humor among self-actualizers is not hostile (e.g., laughing when someone gets hurt), superior (focused on someone’s inferiority), or rebellious. They find humorous the human situation—humanity’s pride, bustle, ambition, striving, and planning. Their humor can poke fun at the self, but not in a masochistic or clownlike way. Similar nonhostile humor has been described among SBHG.

Creativity

Each self-actualizer is creative in a unique way, and “into the naïve and universal creativeness of unspoiled children...greater freshness, penetration, and efficiency of perception...less inhibited, less constricted, less bound, in a word, less enculturated...more spontaneous, more natural, more human” (Maslow, 1970, pp. 170–171). As noted above, SBHG groups are often described as spontaneous and unscripted.

Resistant to Enculturation and Transcendence of Any Particular Culture

According to Maslow, self-actualizers do not approve of and identify with their culture—i.e., they are not well-adjusted (which is a healthy thing since the culture is contrary to wellbeing; Kidner, 2001). They do follow casual, superficial conventions (clothes, language, food). Though they may desire cultural change, they have accepted the slow pace of change. They have a detachment from American culture—“they weigh it, assay it, taste, and then make their own decisions” (p. 173). They have a “less than average need for the familiar and customary” (Maslow, 1970, p. 173). They are less “American” and more “members at large of the human species” (Maslow, 1970, p. 174).

Interestingly, SBHG have similar personalities and worldviews all over the world. Because early experience deeply shapes personality, we have suggested that the evolved nest, which SBHG provide, offers a “cultural commons” for the development of a calm, social and virtuous personality (Narvaez, 2014).

As the reader may have noted, many of us are taught not to self-actualize. We are taught not to follow our feelings and preferences, or even to know them. Lewin (1951) suggested that motives form a psychological force within particular situations that either facilitate (positive valence) or inhibit (negative valence) the individual’s goals. Thus there is a person-by-situation interaction of which motives operate when. From the studies presented in this book and elsewhere, we find that climate in childhood matters for establishing the self-

actualizing self. If one is presented with negative valence for being oneself, one must go “underground” and present a false self to get by.

Becoming a Self-Actualizer

As Maslow noted, becoming a self-actualizer necessitates resurrecting one’s true self—one’s feelings, reactions, preferences—and learning to follow one’s unique spirit. Maslow had advice for those who wanted to become self-actualizers. In his 1971 book, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, he gave eight suggestions (written here in the second person).

Be Here

Experience your life “fully, vividly, selflessly, with full concentration and total absorption” (Maslow, 1971, p. 45). When you do this you are being wholly yourself and it is a moment of self-actualization. Avoid self-consciousness. Avoid shyness and postures. Let down your defenses. Throw yourself into the moment, into experiencing it with all your senses. As the first author has noted elsewhere (Narvaez, 2014), it helps to be in nature or to have a friend with whom you can be emotionally expressive—through silliness, music making or other forms of play.

All Day Long, Choose Carefully

Like wisdom traditions emphasize (Bourgeault, 2003), each moment in your life is one of choice—will you be open or defensive? Maslow opined that a dozen times a day you face the choice of moving toward self-actualization and growth or toward defense, safety, and staying afraid. The examples he uses are moral ones (honesty or dishonesty, steal or not steal) but choices involve everything you do—e.g., trying new foods/music/activities or how you approach others you meet.

You Are a Self: Know Your Self

Let your true self emerge. Shut out the noise of the world that tells you how you should think, feel, behave. Instead, pay attention to your own body’s signals: “Does this taste good on *your* tongue?” (Maslow, 1971, p. 46). Do *you* like the flavor? Did *you* feel good or bad during the movie? Does your spirit like this activity? Does it feel good and right? Honor your own body and spirit’s reactions instead of suppressing or silencing them. Listen to the inner voices that press you toward growth and connection.

“When in Doubt, Be Honest Rather Than Not” (Maslow, 1971, p. 46)

Avoid playing emotional games with others. Avoid posing to be accepted. Look inside for the real you. Take responsibility for your own feelings and reactions. Accept them. “Each time one takes responsibility, this is an actualizing of the self” (Maslow, 1971, p. 47).

Dare to Follow Your Unique Path

Most people do not listen to themselves and are not honest, making them unable to self-actualize. By listening to your inner self, by being honest about your own feelings and reactions, you inch closer toward better life choices. Each of the little choices will lead you to perceive what is truly better for you on your life path—what your mission and destiny are. “Making an honest statement involves daring to be different, unpopular, nonconformist...If clients, young or old, cannot be taught about being prepared to be unpopular, counselors might just as well give up right now” (Maslow, 1971, p. 47).

“Self-Actualization Is Not Only an End State but Also the *Process* of Actualizing One’s Potentialities” (Maslow, 1971, p. 47)

Self-actualization is demanding as it takes practice to become good at something. One must prepare, with all the prior steps, to reach the point of one’s full potential. One wants to aim to be first-rate at one’s life goal, whatever

one's inner self desires. One must work hard.

Set Up the Conditions for Peak Experiences

Find the places where you are “surprised by joy” (Lewis, 1955) and increase your exposure to those situations. Break up illusions and false notions—“learning what one is not good at, learning what one's potentialities are not” (Maslow, 1971, p. 48) helps you discover yourself and find the realms where your peak experiences may be found.

Be Ready to Address Your Psychopathologies

“Finding out who one is, what he is, what he likes, what he doesn't like, what is good for him and what bad, where he is going and what his mission is—opening oneself up to himself—means the exposure of psychopathology” (Maslow, 1971, pp. 48–49). One must find and dismantle the defenses set up against knowing oneself. One must face the unpleasantness so that one can heal and not be governed by defensive systems.

Maslow concludes his advice by saying that “self-actualization is a matter of degree, of little accessions accumulated one by one.” Self-actualizers, little by little, find out who they are and follow it not only in terms of spiritual direction and life path but what their unique biological nature is like (e.g., if beer keeps me up all night, I stop drinking it; if certain materials make me itch, I avoid them)—as noted earlier, this might be an easier place to start.

Maslow was focused on the hierarchy of basic needs and reaching self-actualization as a means to reach human potential for artistic enterprises and humanitarian causes. Like researchers examining social and moral exemplars whose lives contribute to the wellbeing of communities and society, it is not clear that positive psychology, an offshoot of humanistic psychology, has the broader societal context in mind (e.g., Peterson, 2006). As Kidner (2001) has pointed out, psychology seems mostly about helping people conform to the travesties of the modern situation. But other disciplines have moved into the discussion and promotion of wellbeing. The ~~human capabilities~~ *human capabilities* approach is one such movement (Lessmann, Otto, & Ziegler, 2011).

In the Human Capabilities approach, freedom is the emphasis. Although Maslow placed freedom as a precondition for self-actualization: “freedom to speak, freedom to do what one wishes so long as no harm is done to others, freedom to express oneself, freedom to investigate and seek for information, freedom to defend oneself” and he adds conditions of “justice, fairness, honesty, orderliness in the group”; thwarting these freedoms, closely related to the basic needs, will trigger threat response (Maslow, 1970, p. 47). The Human Capabilities approach similarly emphasizes freedom, naming a particular list of basic freedoms. We examine that approach next.

Human Capabilities

The human capabilities approach also emphasizes human needs provision (Nussbaum, 2009; Sen, 1985). It is less a precise theory than a theoretical framework that integrates wellbeing, development, and justice. It emphasizes freedom to achieve wellbeing, shaped by an understanding of what individuals are able to do and be, and the lives they can lead. Unlike other models that emphasize subjectivity (e.g., happiness) or economic wellbeing, the capabilities approach extends the net of inclusion widely, including opportunities for education, political voice, play and other aspects of a full human life.

The human capabilities models that came out of economics and philosophical social justice ~~addresse~~ *addresses* mostly adult capabilities. Nussbaum (2009) identifies ten central capabilities: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imaginations, and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; control over one's environment in political and material ways. We can organize these capabilities by our species

heritages and contrast them with Maslow's list and our own list of evolved needs in early childhood. We also include biological rationale for the early life nest needs. See Table 5.1.

Table the colors in here are really distracting. Can you put the light green only on the header line? 5.1

Comparison of basic needs lists from Maslow, Nussbaum, and the evolved nest

Maslow's hierarchy of needs	Nussbaum's human capabilities	Humanity's evolved nest (sampling)	Neurobiological underpinnings of evolved nest (sampling)
<i>Animal needs</i> Center on line			
PHYSIOLOGICAL: Air (breathing); Water; Food; Sleep; Clothing; Shelter; Sexual instinct	Life; Bodily health	Soothing perinatal period, breastfeeding, affection	Establishment of immune neuroendocrine, stress response systems
SAFETY and protection	Bodily integrity	Responsiveness, no trauma	
	Control over one's environment in political and material ways	Autonomy: Freedom to select relationships, move and act	Coordination of emotion systems (seeking, play)
	Relation to other species	Nature embeddedness and connection	Right hemisphere development
<i>Mammalian needs</i> center on line			
Social belongingness	Affiliation	Community responsiveness and support Intersubjectivity with multiple adults Immersion in communal rituals	sociality and morality shaped through limbic resonance, vagal tone, survival systems
Love and affection		Affection starting in babyhood	Turning up of vagal tone and neuroendocrine systems
	Play	From the beginning of life	Executive function development
Respect; Self-esteem; Identity		Respect of needs in babyhood Apprenticeship in adult activities	Species-typical capacities develop
<i>Human species needs</i> center on line			
Self-actualization (self-fulfillment)	Senses, imaginations, thought; Emotions; Practical reason	Starting in babyhood; competence	Brain synapses and networks develop
Self-transcendence		"In arms" settling	Early RH development

The framework distinguishes between **functionings** and **capabilities**. Functionings are the possible **beings** and **doings** or states and activities of a person. Beings include being well or malnourished, being educated or not, being depressed or content. Doings include working, voting, taking drugs, donating money, using lots of fuel for one's lifestyle. Capabilities are the opportunities to achieve functionings, the pathways to realizing functionings. Does one have the freedom to choose beings and doings? Can one make choices to avoid poverty and achieve wellbeing?

How do the human capabilities relate to children? When child concerns come up in these models, they mostly focus on issues of family planning and women's freedoms in regards to childbearing. Amartya Sen (1985, 1997) writes of generational differences in entitlements (social rights and obligations), capabilities (individual characteristics and social opportunities), and functionings (choice to exercise a capability in relation to societal entitlements). But usually the foci for children's lives are on restrictive or negative rights (not to labor, not to be sexually active) or child labor and obligations to attend schooling.

In terms of functionings, a baby is assumed to have no choice of functionings except to suckle. Societies vary in entitlements to the baby (e.g., to live beyond birth, circumcision). "Entitlements to State care and protection are often weak and passive compared to the power that lies in the hands of kin and local civil society. Infancy is a time of low obligations and uncertain rights" (Cameron, 2011, p. 112).

But, arguably, obligations grow at a faster rate than rights through childhood for many children. Formal obligations to attend school may be accompanied by the less formal obligation to work hard at school and, even, to perform well at school. From this perspective, the idealized "**wester** western" childhood can appear to be constructed out of proscriptions—obligations not to do this or that—with very few positive rights and little practice in choosing functionings.

Most human capabilities theorists emphasize choice and self-determination. Ballet, Biggeri, and Comin (2011): "The capability approach obviously implies the individuals' capacity for self-determination" including letting them choose the lifestyle they prefer (p. 167). They point out that children are not mature enough to decide for themselves in the ways assumed necessary for self-determination (e.g., cognitive capacity). Scholars have addressed this issue in several ways: (1) **child** capitalize wellbeing is not reliant on cognitive capacities or attitudes; (2) Look at the whole life cycle and how early experience influences adulthood, specifically the importance of education for adult autonomy; and (3) Although children can make choices they are unable to rationally evaluate and revise them. In contrast to these approaches, Ballet et al. (2011) offer an argument for children's weak autonomy—to be able to make choices in a range of opportunities (e.g., a democratic school).

Volkert and Wust (2011) focus more specifically on early childhood experience. They name three aspects of the interaction between early experience provided by parents and the future capabilities of children: (1) Parental agentic freedom—**do** change to "whether" they have the income, education, knowledge, time to provide what the child needs; (2) Activities that benefit the child (**they chose** stimulation and social participation); and (3) conversion of the first two into a child's social, emotional, cognitive capacities. They report on a study where they interviewed about 480 mothers of 2 to 3-year-olds regarding their child's stimulation and social contact in the previous two weeks, using this as an outcome for parent agency (a capability). They point out that lack of agency would be coercion "to follow less desirable life plans, remain passive, submissive and desirous of pleasing or alienated from one's own behavior" (Alkire, 2008; Sen, 1985).

Cameron (2011) identified capabilities that can be transmitted from older to younger generations through particular experiences. Political processes help the young development deliberative decision-making skills. Overcoming (with guidance) life **crises** add afterwards: "builds capacities for" **forge** forging self-confidence; learning to manage impairments; **learn** learning compassion through understanding the shared human condition; ethical judgment through moral decision-making; emotional intelligence through the sharing of strong emotion; **opportunities to emotionally** emotional and physiological care for others; learning criteria

for aesthetic judgment; fulfillment through skilled recreational [activities](#) add a sentence to the end: "All these are provisioned by community living, much like the evolved developmental niche."

Why Young Children's Needs Deserve Special Attention

As we showed in Chapters 3 and 4, early life experience influences not only health outcomes but social and moral capacities. Nevertheless, descriptions of early life needs are underdescribed in both Maslow's description of basic needs and the human capabilities literature. There is little sense of babies' freedoms or rights although there is a sense that early experience matters (Maslow, 1970). In the human capabilities literature, Sadlowski (2011) points to dynamism of development and the impact of early life experience on adult wellbeing and suggests that basic functionings (e.g., being in a household that fosters secure attachment) must be guaranteed to children: "For children the most basic capability is to live in caring, loving and stable relations" (p. 227). Not much detail is given for what that good home looks like.

Lewin (1951) suggested that motives form a psychological force within particular situations that either facilitate (positive valence) or inhibit (negative valence) the individual's goals. From the studies presented in this book and elsewhere, we find that climate in childhood matters for fostering the prosocial, but also the actualizing self—[one](#) a self that feels effective and not discouraged. If a child is presented with negative valence for being herself, her true self must go "underground" and she must present a false self to get by. As Maslow noted, becoming a self-actualizer necessitates resurrecting one's true self—one's feelings, reactions, preferences—and learning to follow one's unique spirit.

Recall that humans have multiple inheritances including self-organization and the evolved nest (along with the genome, epigenome, developmental plasticity, biogenome, cultural, and ecological; Oyama, Griffiths, & Gray, 2001). In recent centuries, and especially recent decades in the United States, one inheritance seems to be winning out on all the others in terms of childrearing practices and effects: The cultural inheritance. Culture has been highly influential in determining the care that children receive leading to generations of undercared for mothers, fathers, and children—poorly setting them up for childrearing (by the way she was treated herself) influencing the child's [the](#) epigenome (what genes are turned on and off; e.g., Gudsruk & Champagne, 2012; Weaver, Szyf, & Meaney, 2002) and the biome (the microbes that maintain the immune system and influence wellness and sociality; e.g., Denou et al., 2011; Tilg, 2010). As we have noted in prior chapters, young children's developmental support contributes to wellbeing for the long term. When needs are not met, it represents toxic stress (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Much like literature cited in early chapters about the neurobiological effects of early experience on health, wellbeing and sociomoral capabilities, a recent study suggests that basic physiological functioning, like muscle strength in adulthood, is shaped by early life experience (Cheval et al., 2018).

What do babies need to grow well? We have pointed to humanity's evolved developmental system, the evolved developmental niche or nest. Every animal evolved a nest for its young to match the maturational schedule of its young. The human nest reflects the basic characteristics of the social mammalian nest, which is over 30 million years old (Konner, 2005). It is especially intensive because of the vast immaturity of the human infant at birth, who needs another 18 months before acting like a newborn of most animals. As a result, humans are biosocially constructed from their postnatal experience. Early life is especially important for establishing neurobiological foundations and developmental trajectories. Epigenetic and plastic effects are occurring that lay the groundwork for capacities later (Siegel, 2012). As we described in Chapter 3, the evolved nest includes soothing perinatal experience, several years of breastfeeding, multiple responsive allomothers, a great deal of affection, positive social support for mother and child, self-directed play with others in the natural world. All these components have known neurobiological effects during the time period that is establishing multiple system functioning. In precivilized societies, wise elders commonly provided ongoing guidance (and relief) to new parents and the whole band was involved in child raising. In societies representing our ancestral context, adults display calmness and generosity, communalism and autonomy, and extensive resilience for physical hardship (Ingold, 2005). See Table 5.1 for a comparison of the evolved nest with Maslow's list and the human capabilities list of basic needs.

In economically advanced nations, infants are not receiving their due in multiple ways. Inadequate affectionate touch and emotional coregulation are accompanied by a lack of proper nourishment. The brain appears to require appropriate nourishment as provided by breast milk (Prescott, 1996). Human breast milk is the thin variety that is made up primarily of hormones that appear to keep the brain marinated, granted frequent breastfeeding, with thousands of body and brain building elements. The World Health Organization recommends at least two years of breastfeeding (but the average age of weaning in ancestral context is four years; Hewlett & Lamb, 2005). Additionally, infant brain development requires holding and carrying; (Mason, 1968; Mason & Berkson, 1975). Spitz (1965) showed that monkeys raised without mothers, whose brain development was threatened, were less harmed by isolation if they were rocked. Many modern societies are designed in ways that undermine mother-child bonding, breastfeeding and carrying of children throughout the day as evidenced by unprecedented amounts of child abuse, child suicide, and youth homicide in the twentieth century United States (e.g., Prescott, 1975, 1996).

Cultural and religious beliefs have put evolved mammalian caregiving on the sidelines and even counteracted it. Prescott (1996) came to the conclusion that most children in the United States are susceptible to Somatosensory Affectional Deprivation (SAD), a condition related to depression, violent behavior, and stimulus seeking. SAD comes about from a lack of affectionate touch in early life. The studies in Chapter 4 show some of these effects. Affectionate touch in childhood was positively predictive of forgiveness, and negatively predictive of oppositional behavior after accounting for other factors such as home climate and attachment. Prescott related the pro-punishment and anti-pleasure in religious and cultural beliefs to the neglect of pleasurable touch and the promotion of negative touch.

Because current childrearing practices by most people most of the time do not match the baseline standard of the evolved nest, we can call it “undercare” (Narvaez, 2014). The term “undercare” was coined to distinguish it from “neglect,” a legal term that focuses mostly on physical and emotional wellbeing. Undercare specifically refers to the absence of one or more evolved nest components.

What does undercare do to the capacities that underlie human capabilities? Hughlings Jackson (1884) discussed how a disordered nervous system moves in reverse in terms of evolved functions. Development of the individual can be described as an internal evolution wherein missing functions, lesions, damage or disease are “a process of undevelopment, in the order from least organized, the most complex, and the most voluntary, toward the most organized, most simple, and most automatic.” Though the idea of “undevelopment” may not apply to all diseases it may usefully apply to early development. Modern societies often traumatize young children so that in effect they establish basic insecurity, physiologically and psychologically, forming a deficit mode, making it difficult to maintain openness and the processes of self-actualization Maslow described.⁵

Changing the Culture

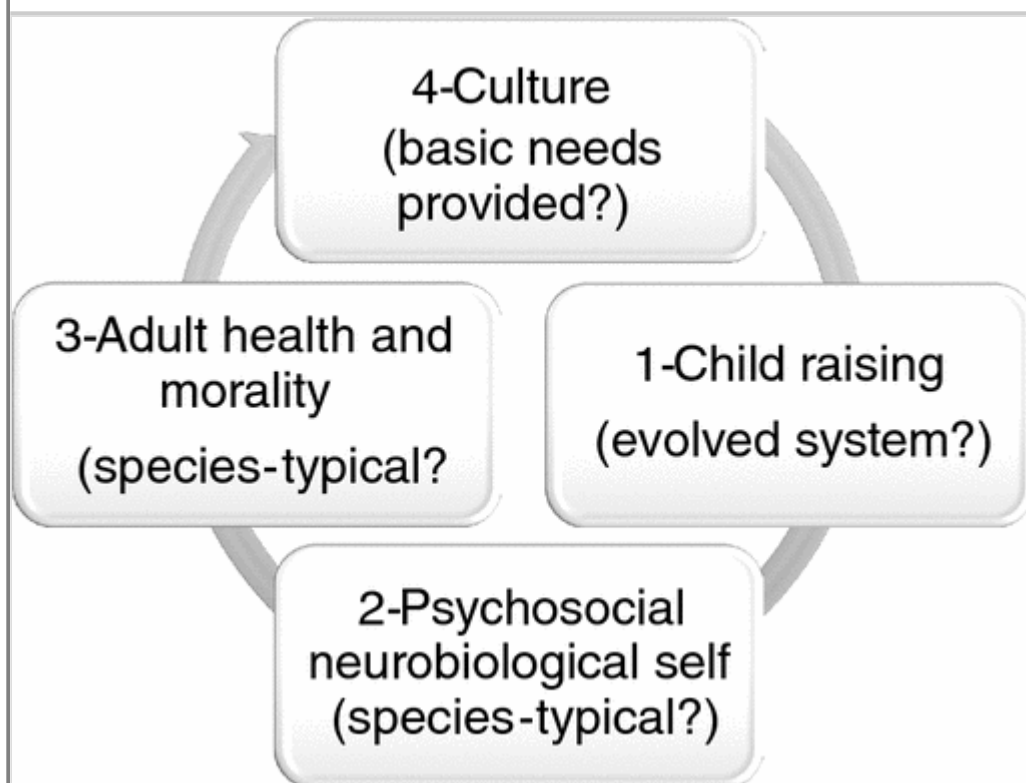
David Korten, in his 2015 book, *Change the Story, Change the Future*, points out how a false story has taken over the dominating institutions of the world, controlling societies and international cooperation and approaches to planetary, cultural and ecological wellbeing. The false story is the Sacred Money and Markets Story, insert: (SMM) which considers money to be wealth, and money makers to be wealth creators around which social advantages should circle. This story infuses everything about modern societies, from media to textbooks to measures of success. However, this story ignores basic needs and actually destroys the real sources of wealth—ecological and social-relational systems. The old story that used to guide human societies is the Sacred Life and Living Earth Story before the SMM story was imposed around the world, understands that the earth is a living set of systems and that life exists only in community. Wellbeing occurs when the basic needs of community members are met. Wealth is measured according to the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the natural world, not numbers on a computer.

This story aligns with the first author’s view of the cyclical nature of basic needs provision. When the first author presents the evolved developmental niche and its effects to members of traditional collectivist societies, they nod their heads knowingly. Audience members from individualistic societies are often shocked and some

protest that, for example, breastfeeding or touch cannot be important (the they indicated they did not provide it to their children or do not want to). They did not receive such care, so how could it be important? The first author discusses this reaction as one of shifted baselines. The understanding of what children need has diminished, leading to neurobiological selves that are less than optimally shaped and adults whose wellbeing and sociomoral functioning are narrow and more self-focused, leading them to create or support a culture that [keep](#) keeps the cycle going. See Fig. 5.1.

Fig. 5.1

The intergenerational cycle of basic need provision



Recall what Maslow said about culture: “Sick people are made by a sick culture; healthy people are made possible by a healthy culture. But it is just as true that sick individuals make their culture more sick and that healthy individuals make their culture more healthy” (Maslow, 1971, p. 5). Even if we do not want to call economically advanced cultures sick, we can still call them species-atypical. And with a species-atypical developmental system or nest, one attains species-atypical outcomes. The focus on intellect alone, the disregard of the body and its intuitions are signs of a suppressed nature, not of someone on the path to self-actualization.

As an addendum to his suggestions on aiming for self-actualization, Maslow discussed the importance of resacralizing what has been desacralized. Resacralizing means perceiving the sacred, eternal, poetic, symbolic in the people and entities that surround us—taking the perspective of eternity (Spinoza’s idea). This notion of sacredness of life, especially children’s spirits, is taken up by the ~~child honoring~~ *child honoring* approach.

Raffi Cavoukin, renown musician, has inspired the philosophy of *child honoring* (Cavoukian & Olfman, 2006) which focuses all policy and institutional decisions “through the lens of what best serves the needs of young children” (Olfman, 2006, p. xii). As a means to turn around humanity’s and the planet’s future prospects, the Child Honoring movement suggests a covenant for honoring children characterized by respectful love, diversity, caring community, conscious parenting, emotional intelligence, nonviolence, safe environments, sustainability,

and ethical commerce. These characteristics are a nice combination of human experiences that optimize development, like the evolved developmental niche, and the institutions that support such development.

In this way, we can move beyond the individual's experience within a family life constellation, to the expectation of the society and which basic needs it provides. In recent years, success at school has become a prominent focus of what children should be doing, even down to preschoolers, but Penelope Leach points out: *“the emphasis on cognitive rather than other aspects of development, and the reiterated use of that word ‘education’, constitute a wide-ranging area of risk”* that disempowers parents, grandparents and others who are oriented to playing with children, and *“Babies, toddlers and pre-school children will learn something (good, neutral or bad) from any experience that is shared with other people, adults and/or children, especially when they are sharing with ‘personal people’: parents or other loved adults”* (Leach, 2011, pp. 24–25).

What are the specific practices that communities ought to provide young children? Thinking about the specific experiences young children need to develop freedoms and capabilities and that optimize a child's development, we can use the evolved nest as a starting point. We suggest a ~~baby bill of rights~~ *baby bill of rights*. See Fig. 5.2.

Fig Terrible formatting for Figure 5.2. Please fix it. . 5.2

Proposed baby Baby's

Title should be capitalized bill of rights (Sometimes an emergency will make one or more impossible but every effort should be made to provide as many as possible to every child) this is a footnote to the table and should not be in the title.

1. Welcoming beginning with natural birth at full term (40–42 weeks)
2. **No induced pain** at birth or in childhood (e.g., no circumcision or corporal or emotional punishment)
3. **Infant - initiated breastfeeding** for several years
4. **Intensive maternal/caregiver contact from birth, with separations only initiated by the child**
5. **Caregivers who provide deep bonding and limbic resonance**
6. **Treatment as an equally - important person**
7. **Needs respected and met (responsive care)**
8. **Appreciation expressed through positive touch**
9. **To be embedded within the activities of a community 24 hours a day**
10. Community support to meet basic needs
11. Full autonomy as development allows
12. Spirit support (limited coercion)
13. **Opportunities for full sensory and intellectual development**
14. Deep contact with the natural world

A baby's bill of rights needs to be accompanied by a mother's bill of rights. Mothers must be supported in many ways to be able to provide for their children. In fact, the community must expect to raise the child together, as it is not a mother-only or parents-only activity.

Beyond Babyhood

In other works, we have discussed early education, particularly how various popular approaches to early care settings align with the evolved nest and whether they support the basic needs of a developing human (Kurth & Narvaez, in press). A group care environment has the potential to provide a small community for which children to grow and flourish. As we noted in Chapter 4 fix comma , what we know is fundamental to being human is social and emotional intelligence which comes from respect for and provision of basic needs in childhood, including during schooling (Elias, Ferrito, & Mocerri, 2016).

At the community level, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) was the first psychologist to spell out the layers of support systems and their interrelations; that contribute to child wellbeing, with his *ecological systems theory*. The layers within the system include the microsystem (immediate settings including the family system, school, church, peers), the mesosystem (interactions among immediate settings such as school and family interaction), the exosystem (the social ecology including mass media, social services, and local politics), and the macrosystem (attitudes and ideologies of the culture that are specific to the historical context). This approach emphasizes the impact of the various components of society, both immediate and distant that impact the growth of a developing human. Other initiatives have applied Bronfenbrenner's theory. The Search Institute (e.g., Benson, Galbraith, & Espeland, 1995) has been at the forefront of developing tools and methods for supporting basic needs across Bronfenbrenner's systems. The positive youth development initiative takes a holistic approach to provide for basic needs in adolescence for optimizing development (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003). These initiatives fit well with the human capabilities approach.

Conclusion

Martha Nussbaum (1990) has argued for an Aristotelian Social Democracy—one where the society (state and government) bears responsibility for establishing conditions for the realization of human capabilities. We suggest that more specifics about babies and child development be added, based in children's basic needs as social mammals. Most importantly, we need to include babies' rights and freedoms in any conception of societal wellbeing.

AQ2

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¹ The evolved nest for young children includes extensive breastfeeding and touch, multiple responsive caregivers and positive social support, soothing perinatal experience, and self-directed social play (Hewlett & Lamb, 2005).

² It is unclear whether this phenomenon of late breaking self-actualization is a human species characteristic or whether it adheres to civilization or even only WEIRD societies where the evolved developmental niche is not provided and people wander into adulthood with primal wounds.

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DOKZzbuJQA> .

⁴ What is neuroticism? According to Maslow, neurotic needs include a desire to dominate, or to subject oneself to the will of another person. These are the predominant self-protective mechanisms we discussed in chapter x, that result from trauma or undercare. He also mentioned the desire to inflict pain. This more likely would be the effect of a “betrayal trauma” (overwhelming painful experiences inflicted by a person we are attached to or depend on for survival) (Freyd, 1994).

⁵ Modern societies often undermine children's confidence systematically by not giving them what they need and instead coercing them from a young age, by change to "age by," for example, force feeding them on adult-convenient schedules with bottles (little control over the liquid pouring down your throat, unlike with breastfeeding); forcing them to sleep alone, contrary to mammalian evolution; punishing them for not doing what adults want; denouncing their intuitions about the sentience of animals and plants as magical thinking, contrary to most societies for most of human history (Narvaez, 2014).