



Maslow, Basic Needs and Contemporary Teacher Training Issues

Michael F. Shaughnessy^{1*}, Bryan Moffitt¹ and Mia Cordova¹

¹*Eastern New Mexico University, Portales, New Mexico, USA.*

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author MFS conceptualized the review, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors BM and MC also contributed to the paper and contributed to the literature review. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/ACRI/2018/42858

Editor(s):

- (1) Dr. Gokhan Duman, Associate Professor, Department of Primary Education, Education Faculty, Gazi University, Turkey.
- (2) Dr. Sivakumar Manickam, Professor, Chemical and Nanopharmaceutical Process Engineering, Associate Dean, Research and Knowledge Exchange, Nanotechnology and Advanced Materials (NATAM), The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus, Malaysia.

Reviewers:

- (1) Rian de Villiers, University of Pretoria, South Africa.
- (2) Nahla Nola Bacha, Lebanese American University, Lebanon.
- (3) Valentino van de Heyde, University of the Western Cape, South Africa.
- (4) P. Moodley, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sciencedomain.org/review-history/26135>

Review Article

Received 22nd June 2018
Accepted 3rd September 2018
Published 7th September 2018

ABSTRACT

The work of Abraham Maslow and his hierarchy of needs has been referred to for decades. However, his ideas and concepts regarding basic needs still require review and reflection in this current zeitgeist. This paper reviews some of the issues confronting teachers relative to Maslow's basic needs.

Keywords: Abraham Maslow; hierarchy of needs; teacher training.

1. INTRODUCTION

Abraham Maslow lived from 1908-1970, but impacted many with his ideas about basic needs, higher order needs, and self-actualization. His theories and books are referenced in almost all Introductory Psychology books in America and

his humanistic ideas has been cited and referenced for decades. Indeed, his concepts remain as fresh and relevant today as they were during the 1960's and 1970's.

He has left behind a body of work that remains relevant, salient and germane even today

*Corresponding author: Email: Michael.Shaughnessy@enmu.edu;

[1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8]. However, his ideas need to be somewhat re-examined in light of what is transpiring in the current cultural milieu and climate. Parents, teachers, counselors and others in the U.S. and other countries need to be quite sensitive to Maslow's ideas regarding basic needs, and how the lack of these needs may negatively impact children in the schools and teachers ability to provide instruction.

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, all human beings need certain very elemental basic needs to survive. For example, we all need air, and food and water on a daily basis to survive from day to day. Sadly, in some regions of the United States and around the world, water is in short supply and food is scarce. This certainly impacts the child's ability to learn and process information. In some parts of the United States, the child has access to minimal food, but the food is lacking in nutritional value. While the government has attempted to ameliorate this situation, many children still go to bed hungry and are difficult to teach in the morning. Ruby Payne [9] has cogently written about students in poverty and the difficulty teaching those students. She has written more than thirty books on this topic and her work remains as relevant today as when she first began her investigations into the culture of poverty in terms of the students in this realm. Their basic needs are far from met, and they bring their empty stomachs to the school where teachers are expected to fill their minds with knowledge and information. Some students have other "basic needs" one of which is simply to feel safe and secure. Unfortunately in this current day and age, many students do not feel safe at school.

They have heard about school shootings on the news, and hear about guns and weapons on social media, and are terrified that something may happen on their school campus. While teachers may try to allay their fears, their concern is pervasive. They may talk about a strange student who behaves erratically or who talks about "blowing up the school" or something along those lines. For many students, this is a fear that haunts them and interferes with their processing of information. They have observed the incidences in Florida wherein police are stationed outside a school and apparently did not enter to help or assist. They have heard on the news about 17 students being killed and many others wounded. These students live in fear of such an occurrence transpiring at their school. Some students are quite active on social media

and they may discuss their fears and some middle school and high school students do comment about their concerns about a student "going postal" or whatever phrase they use currently. Apparently, there was extensive discussion of the shooter in Florida long before the incident occurred, and students, being intelligent young folk that they are, realized that the police and the schools did not protect them from this lone deranged individual.

2. THE STUDENTS OF TODAY

The children of today bring in an entirely different set of circumstances into the classroom. Loretta Bradley, past President of the American Counseling Association, has noticed a significant difference in how kids function in everyday life that may have an impact on their levels within Maslow's hierarchy of needs. There are differences such as playing outside versus playing inside, the use of technology to socialize instead of receiving socialization in the neighborhood, an increase in bullying from the perceived anonymity of a social network, more life stressors serving as a tipping point for mass shootings, students have constant accessibility via a social media device that is close to them such as their cell phone being with them even close to their bed, and parent's fear of letting children out of their sight (Bradley, L. April 23, 2018; Personal communication).

These societal changes can somewhat apply and be relevant to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. There are major differences in socialization such as playing outside versus playing inside which impacts the social arena and interpersonal relationships. Kids socialize online now instead of socializing outside in the realm of play. An adolescent's social status is sometimes determined by how many friends they have on some social media site.

Maslow's level of social belonging is lesser when children do not play together. Gaining socialization from technology sources seems lesser than doing so face to face. Social skills may not develop with some children who spend their time in front of a computer screen.

Maslow's level of security that includes safety is effected by children not going out to play together at the park or in the neighborhood. Parents are afraid to leave their children alone in the neighborhood for fear of something happening to them.

3. BASIC NEEDS FOR SECURITY

There are others who live in fear and do not feel secure. These are individuals who may have been brought to the United States by their parents from some other country, and are now in this country illegally. They are living in fear that their parents may be taken away, they are living in fear that the family will be returned to some other country and they arrive at school concerned about strangers that they may also see around the school grounds that could be child molesters or sex traffickers.

The increase in bullying might be related to the existence of technology and the perceived anonymity of socialization from behind a technology screen. This would involve Maslow's sense of safety through security. Would children say as many rude comments to other children, if those other children were in front of their face while they were saying it? It seems easier to make comments of a bullying nature from behind the anonymity of a technology device. The existence of this phenomenon has been named online: internet troll. Seeking a reaction from users does fulfill a troll's need for power. However, this anonymous search for power is very unpopular with other people. Teachers are generally sympathetic to the fears of their pupils. Teachers are generally sensitive to the concerns that their students have. However, they do not always have the skills to assist students living in abject fear, and pupils who are struggling from day to day.

Their basic needs for safety and security are not being met. Often there is teacher turnover and the trusted individual who has guided them for many months leaves. This too is devastating to the student who has little recourse and has few adults who might understand things from the child's point of view. Maslow has indicated that when lower basic needs are not met, that it is difficult for the person to continue to grow and develop to their full potential. In many schools, students do not have a good self-esteem or self-worth because they have been bullied by someone who taunts, mocks or ridicules them for whatever reason. Teachers and principals cannot be everywhere at all times, and thus bullying and sometimes even physical violence can occur.

4. OTHER RELEVANT BASIC NEEDS

There are indeed other basic needs that are not being met in the schools- even such a simple

thing as exercise or art or music are eliminated from the curriculum due to budget cuts or Common Core or some other pedagogical concern. Children need exercise, and very simply, play. They are children who learn about the world via play. Piaget and many others have written about the various forms of play and how each type of play is important for intellectual and emotional development.

Students are constantly connected, blurring the boundary lines between school and home. This impacts Maslow's need for security through safety and may also impact the physical need of rest. When a child goes to bed, the last thing they may see is a social interaction on their phone. When does the child get time off from life? In previous generations, the child was protected from life by parents that chose how much of that life to divulge to the child, based upon their individual parenting styles. Now the child has access to many more parts of life that exist without the parental filter. If a child is having problems at school or in the neighborhood, the child in previous generations could come home to what existed as a safe place. Now the child is connected to that school and neighborhood with a technology device that can exist a foot away from their bed. The physical need for rest may be impacted when kids stay up too late on their phone because there is social drama playing out on social media.

There does seem to be an increase in what teachers describe as "drama". There seems to be a heightened emotionality to life today, and students appear to be overly emotionally sensitive to criticism and feedback from teachers, and peers. There seems to be an inordinate need for social acceptance.

Teachers often communicate their own anxiety to their pupils regarding the results of these high stakes tests. Subtle comments to children are picked up and heard and impact developing children. Pupils are asked to excel and achieve at tests, and many of those children are unprepared for those tests for various and sundry reasons. Yet the apprehension and anxiety surrounding the week of testing is palpable. Student feel the anxiety and instead of getting a joyful, exciting educational experience, they are receiving messages about their performance from a teacher whose career hangs in the balance.

Students in the classroom today have fewer of their psychological needs met than in the past.

They even get less rest and sleep due to staying up late socializing on social media, they feel less safe due to their increased exposure to the world via technology, and engage in less socialization because of technology. The threats of online bullying and mass shootings are a current threat that certainly causes more anxiety today than students have faced in the past.

Maslow's hierarchy did not include being connected to technology or being impacted by technology because this technology did not exist at the time of Maslow's seminal work. In a world driven by technology, the absence of technology in the hierarchy might receive some future attention in the literature.

5. MASLOW, SUPERFICIALITY AND BASIC NEEDS

In today's world of Facebook, Snapchat, Second Life and various other "social media" sites people can "meet" on line and begin to form some sort of "relationship". Indeed, children and adolescents can share their online names, and communicate with each other using abbreviations and via sending "selfies".

Increasingly, our children are growing up in an environment where they meet another person who could in fact, be a predator. They might meet someone who lies about their age. They might encounter an undercover policeman, in some "room" and waste a lot of homework time chatting with this individual.

While Maslow did not speak or write directly to the issue of intimacy, most would agree that we all need a certain amount of emotional support, validation and understanding. Erikson has written about psychosocial crises- and what has to be resolved at various stages of development. The establishment of one's "identity" should not revolve around how many "friends" one has on Facebook or how many selfies have been shared. It should be worked for, sought after and achieved via a number of different routes- via sports, perhaps, academic achievement, or simply being part of a group of individuals who sincerely care about each other. Some of this may be found in worship services, others in extracurricular activities.

Deep meaningful inter-personal relationships are what is important in life. One can meet some person named "Big Buffet Boy" online, and perhaps share a few jokes or share a few stories-

but that other person could in fact have some sort of emotional or mental health issue. Maslow's basic social and interpersonal needs can hardly be met over the Internet, where one may present a different facade, and one may have few, if any social skills, due to a long history of being lonely and deprived of social stimulation. Or perhaps that person has had a long history of simply playing computer games, which fulfill no real interpersonal need.

6. SPECIAL GROUPS

An especially vulnerable group is those children with speech and language impairments. Frequently, avoided or mocked by their peers, drop-out rates among these youth can be twice the average. This disturbing outcome partners with emotional and mental insecurity and instability, leading to increased depression and anxiety rates among these children. While these children may have some respite in their sessions with the speech-language pathologist, the majority of their day is spent in their home classroom(s). Here, their most basic needs for security and safety must be met to support their achievement, and, frankly, keep them enrolled.

A child with a language impairment may stutter, have a lisp or take time to gather his or thoughts. False starts such as "umm" or "uh..." may punctuate his/her speech. Not only does this draw attention, it frequently alienates the child. As every child vies for acceptance and a soft place to land socially, this child has that much more of a fight. The moment words leave her mouth, a peer may disengage or mock him or her. How can a child trying to fit in neatly do so if his/her very voice is a burden? Typically, he or she will drop out.

He or she may not leave that year or even five years later. But she will likely drop out of school as soon as he/she is able. He or she was not safe at school, so he/she left to pursue safety elsewhere. How can this story change? How can we support a child with a language impairment? How do we teach anything to our children? We can educate the other children. We can educate one another. We can promote tolerance and kindness. We teach by example. We model. We can stand against bullying with zero tolerance. More and more discussion of bullying is happening, even with celebrity endorsement.

However, the fact remains that the social pressures to fit in, have a best friend, and most

basically connect with other human beings, is unavoidable. If a child is bullied, he or she faces a fundamental question of survival. If the child reports the bully, the retaliation can be worse than the bullying itself, not to mention the reverberations throughout the child's social community. As the bully, or bullies, is revealed, the victim will pay for speaking up. Again, a child's most basic need to feel safe and secure is further compromised. It is not difficult to imagine why a child may elect to remain silent when bullied.

How can this be avoided? A transparent and equitable approach to student safety must be taken. Bullying must be discussed. Retaliation and reverberation must be monitored and prevented. An educated population can change the world, as we know. This cannot be a simple once a year presentation against bullying. This must be worked into the very fabric of the classroom, for children with and without special education requirements. This must become inherent. Racially, Ethnically, Culturally Different Children.

The schools today are more heterogeneous than ever before. There are different racial groups, students from different religions, different ethnicities and cultures than ever before. These students are seen as "different" and are not necessarily accepted by their peer group or even by teachers. They too may not receive the acceptance of others and their basic social needs for interaction may not be met. Teachers often do their best to make them part of the classroom group.

At the high school level, there may be students who are grappling with their sexuality or dealing with their sexual needs and desires. They may be students who are firmly involved in a lesbian or homosexual relationship. They might also simply be exploring their sexuality and may be interested in both sexes. For many students, adolescence is a difficult transition with which they are attempting to cope. While some of their basic needs may be being met (food, water) some of their higher order needs such as safety and security may not be being met. They may be ostracized by peers or ignored by others.

7. THE GIFTED AND THEIR EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Gifted children are another group that sometimes have difficulties in adjustment and getting their

basic needs met. Indeed, even their intellectual needs may not be being met as they may not be being challenged in the regular education classroom, and they may be bored, disinterested and apathetic.

They may not feel challenged or supported in their interests. Indeed, their interests in mollusks, turtles, castles, tanks, undersea life, or the anatomy of the brain may strike others as odd, different, bizarre and idiosyncratic.

Teachers may not recognize them as talented or gifted or creative and just see them as an annoying nuisance. They may not as yet have been identified as gifted, or they may have missed the cutoff score for gifted placement by a few points.

8. WHAT ARE "BASIC NEEDS" IN THE YEAR 2018?

Some of the "basic needs of human beings" remain the same. We need air, water, food, and shelter. However, once those basic needs are met, according to Maslow, we seek to get those other higher order needs met. In the schools, children want to feel that they are accepted, that they are valued, and that they are cherished and prized. Of more importance, children want to feel safe and secure. They want to feel free from fear, and be respected, and not put down, mocked or ridiculed for their disability or exceptionality. Maslow did not live to see inclusion and mainstreaming in his life time, but he would certainly advocate for the basic needs of children with autism, cerebral palsy, and other exceptionalities to be met. He would certainly want those gifted children to reach their full potential and to be on the road to self-actualization. He would certainly want the social and emotional needs of all children to be met. How exactly he would propose this be done in the current school zeitgeist is debatable.

9. IS MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS RELEVANT IN THE YEAR 2020?

As we approach the year 2020, it seems reasonable to continue to assume that students need air, water, food, a roof above their heads, and that they feel fairly safe and secure. Students want to feel wanted, needed, cherished and cared for, in most cases.

However, in this age of Facebook and Snapchat and all of these "social media" items, one wonders what needs these items do fulfill- if

indeed they fulfill any needs at all. While one may have many "friends" on Facebook, they may not have any real intimate, interpersonal relationships to discuss their dreams, hopes, fear and concerns. They may not have a pal, or friend with which to grieve the loss of a pet. They may not have a "chum" to discuss the breakup of a teenage relationship. Having a very large number of "friends" on some social media site may do little to curb the loneliness that one may feel during the night after receiving a bad grade on a test. Certainly communication can be almost immediate, but the quality of the communication is superficial. The depth, breath and intensity of the communication may be limited to simple initials. And when one posts a LOL on an e-mail is that other person really laughing, or are they just keeping the typing going.

And is a cell phone a need? Is it a "basic need"? Would Abraham Maslow consider the latest device an imperative need? Or would he scoff at the minimal interaction that he would be observing as students in a McDonald's sit and text to other peers while sitting in front of each other.

There are human needs to try to read and understand other human beings- to understand their tone of voice- their body language- even their clothing and what their clothing may represent.

10. TEACHER TRAINING AND MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Increasingly, teachers are becoming more and more aware and sensitive to meeting the basic needs of all children. Increasingly there are different racial, ethnic and cultural groups as well as students with special needs. It is becoming increasingly apparent, that teachers need much more extensive training to work with students from different groups, as well as students with special needs. Further, teacher training must assist teachers to provide for the very basic needs of some students, as well as the higher order educational needs of gifted and other special groups. Further, the basic safety and security needs must be considered and addressed. It is hope that this paper will provide some awareness and sensitivity to some of these issues and raise awareness as to these concerns. Much of Abraham Maslow's work has been recently compiled into a book entitled "Future Visions" which has been edited by Edward Hoffman. As we know, Maslow died

prematurely and could not share many of his last writings, but the book "Future Visions" edited by Edward Hoffman [10] enables us to have some clearer understanding of Maslow, his works, and his thoughts and ideas. It is also hoped that this book will serve as an impetus for other scholars and researchers to continue investigation into what Maslow would say are "the farther reaches of human nature".

There has been some current research into some of Maslow's ideas. Tay and Diener [11] have investigated a sample of 123 countries and looked at the relationship of needs and what they term as "subjective well being" (which included both positive and negative emotions and life evaluation. In their research it was found that the fulfillment of "basic and safety needs" was based on country membership.

Ryan and Deci [12] have written about the need for students to have a certain amount of self-determination, and that this will produce a certain amount of intrinsic motivation and lead to further self- growth and development and well-being. Ryff and Keyes, [13] also reviewed and revisited the work of Maslow in terms of their investigation into psychological well- being.

11. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has attempted to re-examine some of Abraham Maslow's ideas and point out their relevancy in today's world. Some contemporary investigations have been cursorily reviewed. There is obviously a need for empirical examination and study, with the current populations of students in the classroom today. It would be helpful for some scholar or researcher to develop a survey of sorts in order to ascertain if there are specific differences in what male and female students seem to need and desire in contemporary society. There is much need for additional research to build on the seminal work of Abraham Maslow, particularly in certain realms such as the need for safety and security in today's violent world.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

REFERENCES

1. Maslow AH, Mittelmann B. Principles of abnormal psychology; the dynamics of

- psychic illness. New York, NY: Harper; 1951.
2. Maslow AH. New knowledge in human values. New York, NY: Harper; 1959.
 3. Maslow AH. Religions, values, and peak-experiences. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press; 1964.
 4. Maslow AH. Motivation and personality. New York, NY: Harper & Row; 1970.
 5. Maslow AH. The farther reaches of human nature. New York, NY: Viking Press; 1971.
 6. Maslow AH. Dominance, self-esteem, self-actualization: Germinal papers of A.H. Maslow. Monterey, CA: Brooks/ Cole Publishing Company; 1973.
 7. Maslow AH. Toward a psychology of being. New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold; 1982.
 8. Chiang H, Maslow AH. The healthy personality: Readings. New York, NY: D. Van Nostrand Company; 1977.
 9. Payne R. A framework for understanding poverty: A cognitive approach. Revised Edition. N.Y. Aha! Process Incorporated; 2013.
 10. Hoffman E. Future visions: The Unpublished Papers of Abraham Maslow N.Y. SAGE; 1996.
 11. Tay L, Diener E. Needs and subjective well-being around the world. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 2011;101(2):354-365.
 12. Ryan RM, Deci EL. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. American Psychologist. 2000;55:68-78.
DOI: 10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68
 13. Ryff CD, Keyes CLM. The structure of psychological well-being revisited. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 1995;69:719-727.
DOI: 10.1037/0022-3514.69.4.719

© 2018 Shaughnessy et al.; This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Peer-review history:

*The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
<http://www.sciencedomain.org/review-history/26135>*