

Bibliographic Data: Abraham H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," Psychological Review, 50 (1943), pgs 370-396.

I. QUESTIONS

A. What questions is the author attempting to answer?

1. What are humans' basic needs? (Empirical)
2. What is the relationship between these needs and human motivation? (Empirical)
3. What are the preconditions for satisfying the basic needs? (Empirical)
4. What are the exceptions to the interrelationships of the needs? (Empirical)

B. Does the author explain the significance of the question(s)?

The author asserts that the problem with motivation theory is the significant lack of reliable data regarding human motivation, primarily due to a lack of good theory. Scholars had generally studied behavior, which he argues does not equate to motivation. Therefore, he is attempting to challenge existing theory by proposing a new framework to be further researched.

II. BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES, DATA, AND METHODOLOGY

A. Have other scholars/ practitioners attempted to answer these questions? The

author asserts that his theory falls within the traditions of James and Dewey and blends the theories of Wertheimer, Goldstein, Gestalt Psychology, Freud, and Adler. Specifically, the author uses Adler as the building block of his theory on self-esteem as a basic need, saying only that Adler stressed this need and points out that Freud neglected it. Further, he builds on Goldstein's work regarding self-actualization but again does not specify what he said about it. No other information is provided regarding the questions these scholars posed.

B. What methodology does the author employ to investigate the questions?

1. Maslow's work is constructed on the basis of his own clinical experience. He also reviewed existing motivation theory research, as demonstrated through the citations listed above, as well as work by Cannon, Fromm, Horney, Kardiner, Levy, Murray, Plant, Shirley, Tolman, and Young.
2. Maslow does not cite specific data or empirical evidence to answer his research questions. In fact, he states that his theory should stand or fall based on future research, not on available facts or evidence.

III. ANSWERS

A. What are the answers the author provides to the research questions?

1. Maslow asserts that there are five basic human needs: physiological (e.g., food); safety (i.e., physical and emotional); love (e.g., belongingness); esteem (e.g., respect from others); and self-actualization (i.e., doing that for which one is best suited).

2. The author proposes that humans are motivated by the desire to satisfy these five needs. He further suggests that the needs fall into a "hierarchy of prepotency," following the order listed in the preceding question. This hierarchy of prepotency means that human consciousness is monopolized by the most basic need (e.g., physiological) until it is satisfied, at which time consciousness will be dominated by the next basic need in the hierarchy (safety), and so forth until all of the needs are satisfied. He acknowledges that it is not necessary to fully satisfy the need before moving on to the next, as long as the need is "fairly well satisfied." He further states that once a need is satisfied, it no longer serves as a motivator.
3. Maslow claims that there are certain conditions that serve as prerequisites to the five needs. If they are not present, it is almost impossible to satisfy the basic needs. These conditions include freedom to speak and express one's self, to do what one wishes within certain limits, to defend one's self, to be treated fairly and justly, and to seek information.
4. Maslow indicates that there are seven apparent exceptions to the hierarchy. Some people value esteem over than love. Some creative people are motivated by self-actualization even when basic needs are not yet met. Some people do not experience high aspirations and are therefore not motivated by self-actualization. Some people who were not socialized early in life may not experience the need for love. For some, when a need has been satisfied for a long time, it may be "underevaluated." Some people may want to satisfy basic needs but may not act upon that desire. Finally, some are driven by ideals rather than basic needs and will deprive themselves of basic needs for the sake of that ideal (e.g., hunger strike).

IV. EVALUATION/CRITIQUE

A. What type of answer does the author provide to the questions?

Maslow does not say that these *should* be humans' basic needs or that they *should* fall in a hierarchy. In addition, he writes that this is a suggested theory being put forth for further study and is not based on fact or evidence.

Therefore, his answers are conceptual. This differs from what I was expecting. Considering the attention Maslow's theory has received by scholars for over 50 years, I expected the answers to be based on empirical, scientific study.

B. What is the quality of the answer(s)?

1. The answers presented are clear, understandable, and logical.
2. However, the research design/methodology is not clear. The author states that his research is based on his own clinical experience but does not clarify the type or length of clinical experience he has had. Further, it would have been helpful if Maslow provided more information on how many observations he made through his experience, how they were documented, and what specific techniques he used to analyze the data to reach his conclusions.

3. Maslow specifically states that the theory is not based on fact and evidence. As a result of this lack of evidence, I feel, and believe many scholars would agree, that there are many holes in his theory. For instance, he indicates that there are exceptions to the hierarchy but does not indicate what percentage of the population is subject to these exceptions. He states that it is not necessary to fully satisfy a need before moving on to the next but cannot quantify how much satisfaction is necessary before moving on. Finally, the preconditions he sets forth for satisfying the basic needs are not present in many non-democratic cultures and societies, thereby limiting the application of his theory. It would have been beneficial to see the theory scientifically tested to show empirical evidence that the theory stands up across cultures. Because this data is lacking, I am not persuaded that the author has good answers to the questions.