

Character Motivation and Human Behavior

An overview of several
psychology theories
as analytical tools

~

By Vince DeMiero
with *much* thanks to Michole Mattix & Kimberly Nelson

Behaviorism

- A belief that *behavior* stems from *conditioning*. In other words, a person *behaves* according to what he/she has learned from *experience*.
 - What he/she has been rewarded or punished for doing
 - Association of a learned behavior from another event
 - Conditioning occurs through interaction with one's environment
 - Behaviorists believe that our responses to environmental stimuli shape our behaviors

Behaviorism Examples

- “Negative attention is better than no attention at all” (*he/she wouldn't be doing it if there wasn't some kind of payoff*)
- Delayed gratification vs. immediate gratification (*Ex: saving to buy a car; planning for a trip years in advance*)
- Behavior of a role model (*imitating someone you look up to and learning from the success/consequences they encounter*)
- Not liking Pizza Hut after one bad meal (*association might mean not liking any fast food restaurant*)

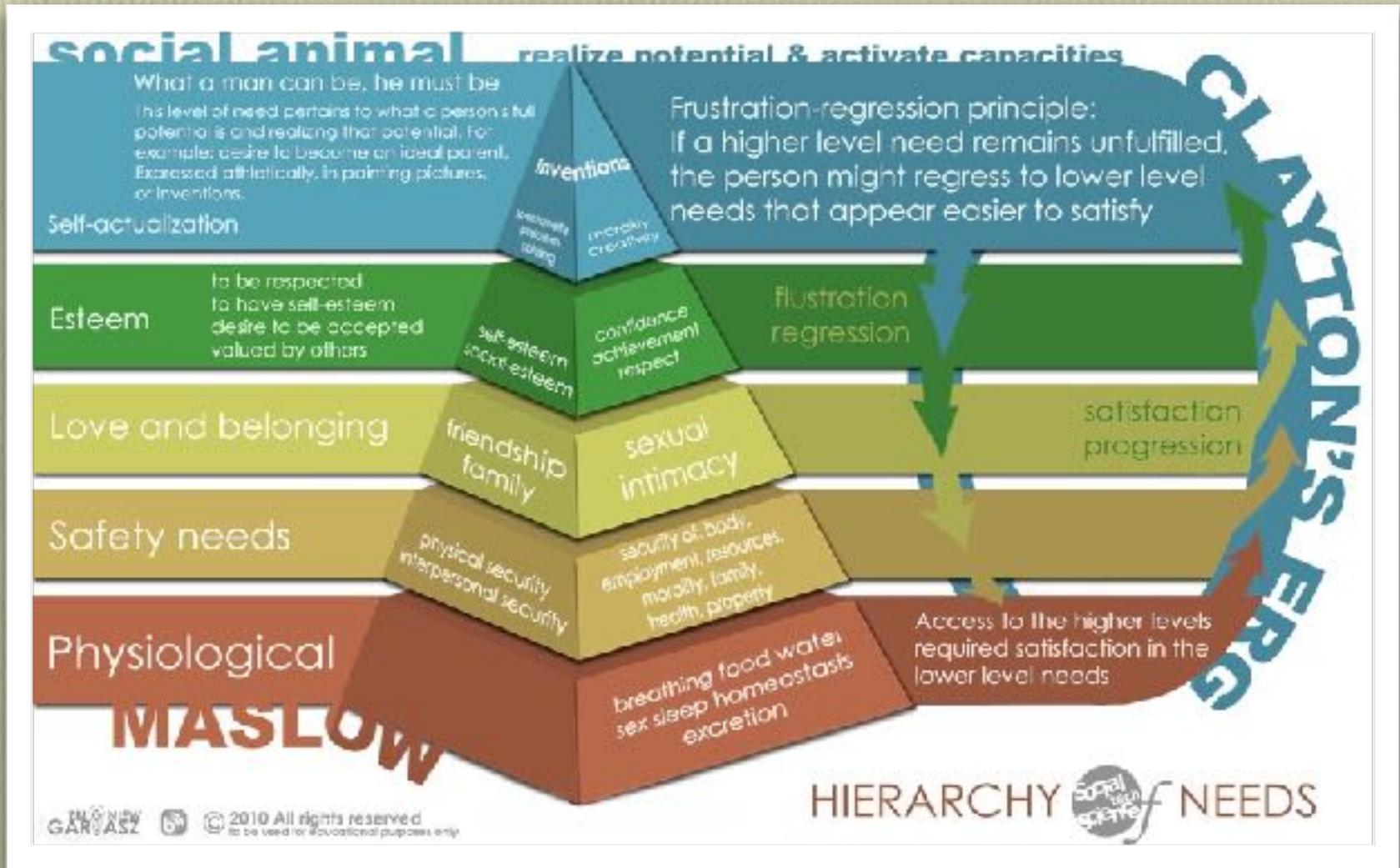
Humanism

- The *belief* that all *humans have potential and value*; are *inherently good*
- An emphasis on common human needs
- Seek solely rational ways of solving human problems
- The human spirit is powerful
- We are all born good with greatness inside

Humanist Examples

- We behave according to certain needs. Whether these needs are met (or not) determines how we act (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs):
 - **Self Actualization** (*reaching one's potential; contributing to society in a positive way*)
 - **Esteem** (*self worth*)
 - **Love & Belonging** (*strong, emotional connection to people*)
 - **Safety** (*security*)
 - **Physiological** (*hunger, thirst, shelter*)

Humanist Examples



Cognitive Psychology

- Focus is on *mental processes*, including how people *think, perceive, remember and learn*
- The *thoughts* we have inside our own heads *contribute greatly to our actions.*
 - Examples:
 - What we hear becomes our thoughts, our thoughts become our beliefs, our beliefs create our actions
 - The emphasis is on our internal sentences, our thoughts:
 - “I am so good at this!” or “I hate school!” (*You start believing what you say, then acting upon that*)

Cognitive Examples

- What we hear becomes our thoughts, our thoughts become our beliefs, our beliefs create our actions
- The emphasis is on our internal sentences, our thoughts:
 - “I am so good at this!” or “I hate school!” (*You start believing what you say, then acting upon that*)
 - Women in the White House strategy
 - Pre-debate strategy of the all-girls’ debate team

Neurobiological Psychology

- This approach is all about the *physical makeup of our brains and bodies*
- Behavior is based on electrical and chemical events taking place within our bodies
 - Our DNA; predisposition to certain behaviors (*tend to be shy; athletic; humorous*)
 - Chemical (im)balance in our brains influences our behavior – as well as chemicals we give to ourselves (*Ex: depression, addiction*)
 - The physical creation of our brain due to environmental influences

Psychoanalysis

- Belief that *human behavior is deterministic*
- Behavior is *governed by irrational forces*, the *unconscious*, and our *instinctual* and biological drives
- Psychoanalytic theorists *do not* believe in free will
- Psychoanalytic theorists also believe that *behavior is indirectly influenced by our childhood experiences*
 - Unresolved conflicts with our parents; stored somewhere in our brain (*the unconscious*)
 - Behavior could be based on our impulses; whether we were taught to control them or not

Sociocultural

- Sociocultural theorists believe in the important contributions that society makes to individual development
- This theory stresses the interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live
- ***We do what others who share our culture do:***
 - Culture could be defined by religion; family; peers; media; ethnic background; etc.
 - Example: North American culture vs. Italian with regards to being on time