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Open Dialogue

Why are you still talking about Maslow?

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Abstract

In his seminal papers, Maslow (1943a, 1943b) argued that individuals had basic needs that were hierarchical in nature. These needs were, in order, physiological, safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualisation. The original argument was that individuals could not move from one level of need until another had been satisfied (Maslow, 1943b). Since Maslow, many theorists have offered refinements and alternatives to Maslow's suggestions. For example, Dweck (2017) has attempted to bring together the range of extant theorising to create a unified model of motivation. She suggests that acceptance, optimal predictability, and competence are basic needs and that these needs lead to four further emergent needs, trust, control, status/self-esteem and self-coherence. What Dweck's model helps show us is that there is considerable evidence that there may be many other needs that do not align with Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

So, why are students still citing Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" as the theory they have most encountered? What has Maslow got to do with contemporary motivational theorising and research? Why do we still think Maslow's theory is relevant? Practitioners and educators need best evidence to transfer knowledge and create the most effective interventions.

In this paper, I'll explain why using Maslow is problematic not because it is misguided, but that motivational theorists have moved the field on to identify more complex explanations behind the fundamental drivers of behaviour. Most importantly, I will argue that citing Maslow is usually a result of lazy thinking and general ignorance of the depth of motivational theorising. If we are to progress knowledge in the Psychology of Education, especially in terms of knowledge transfer, we are duty-bound to respect and represent contemporary theorising. Maslow is a seminal and relevant part of the history of motivation, but anyone still citing his theory as the current explanation of motivated behaviour is probably poorly prepared, does not understand the field, or at worst, an academic charlatan.

Keywords: *Maslow, Motivation, Basic Needs, Competence*

Opening section

“The present theory then must be considered to be a suggested program or framework for future research and must stand or fall, not so much on facts available or evidence presented, as upon researches (sic) yet to be done, researches suggested perhaps, by the questions raised in this paper.” (Maslow, 1943b, p. 371).

The ubiquity of Maslow

I teach a final year module entitled “Motivation in Education”. One of my first activities is to ask students to simply list theories of motivation they have heard of using a software tool. This final year module is an option module so hopefully chosen by students who have an interest in motivation or education or both. Figure one is an example of their responses.

<<<Figure 1 about here>>>

For those of us in the Psychology of Education who are constantly engaging with various elements of contemporary motivation theory, the obvious question is, why should students be so familiar with an eighty-year-old theory when we have so many more evidence-based and theoretically developed alternatives? To answer my rhetorical question, I have another anecdote. In 2024, I attended a conference where one of the keynote speakers, someone who had been recognised for their teaching excellence, used Maslow's hierarchy of needs as an explanation for behaviour identified in a study the speaker had conducted. I suspect many of us have had Maslow cited to us in similar situations. And herein lies the problem. Suppose the supposed cream of the educational community think Maslow is a useful explanatory theory. In that case, this is the theory that students will be taught and cite as the one they are most familiar with. In other words, students' knowledge comes from what they are being taught, so it is hardly surprising that they attach relevance to these theories. Students cite Maslow because *we* are telling them this theory is still relevant.

In this paper, I'll firstly outline Maslow's theory so we can be clear what he did and did not propose. Secondly, I'll summarise some of the common criticisms of his theory. Thirdly, I'll offer some suggestions for where Maslow sits in relation to contemporary theorising. Fourthly, I will then go on to suggest why Maslow is still well cited and who the problematic *we* are.

Without a doubt, Maslow's ideas were seminal, well-articulated and derived from actual evidence or reasonable extrapolations from arguments at the time. Maslow himself, as evidenced by the quote at the start of this section (Maslow, 1943b), wanted his ideas to be discussed, challenged and refined. The fact that they have been is a testament to the persuasiveness of his initial theses. However, in his critique of Maslow, in explaining the fields where Maslow has been influential, Neher (1991) points out, "*Maslow is seldom cited in the*

research literature on motivation, which means that his theory, to a significant extent, lies outside the mainstream of testing any critical evaluations that is the lifeblood of any vital theory” (p. 90). As my anecdotes suggest, Maslow is indeed popular and embedded as motivationally relevant.

It is not the intention of this paper to critique Maslow’s ideas in their entirety. This task has been undertaken and appropriate evidence and arguments have been put forward (See Neher, 1991, for a useful example). The question this Open Dialogue addresses is how relevant Maslow’s ideas are for the Psychology of Education in 2025. Our section is interested in behaviours that are relevant to learning and achievement in educational settings such as workplaces, schools, colleges, universities and in post-tertiary education and to this end, I focus on a few examples that should be taken of exemplars of types of argument we should be thinking about when we cite Maslow’s work.

The question, therefore, can be honed down to, how much is the use of Maslow a useful explanation for behaviours we see in educational environments such as schools and workplaces? By useful, I do not mean popular, I mean theoretically relevant to the concept being discussed (e.g., learning engagement, achievement). Or is it that Maslow’s ideas are fundamental to our understanding of contemporary theorising, and rather than a historical footnote, the stated motivation mechanisms stand up to contemporary explanations for motivated behaviour in the domains we are interested in?

Before moving to the more detailed arguments, it is useful to remind ourselves of Maslow’s ideas in their original form.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs explained

Maslow (1943b) conceived of motivation as a series of needs that once satisfied, allowed the individual to be motivated by the next level of need. The premise for his first need was the concept of *homeostasis*, that is, the body's efforts to achieve (internal) equilibrium. The first basic need is the need for food and water and the concept of homeostasis, that is, the need for the body to seek equilibrium (Maslow, 1943b). When individuals are hungry, thirsty, fatigued they will seek out food, water and rest to the exclusion of all other motivated behaviour. Maslow (*ibid*) makes the argument that the reason these needs come first in the hierarchy is that when these needs are not sated, the individual is unable to engage in other conscious behaviour: *"If all the needs are unsatisfied, and the organism is then dominated by the physiological needs, all other needs may become simply non-existent or be pushed into the background. It is then fair to characterize the whole organism by saying simply that it is hungry, for consciousness is almost completely pre-empted by hunger."* Maslow refers to *"...our chronically and extremely hungry man"* and goes on to suggest that *"Utopia can be defined very simply as a place where there is plenty of food."* (p. 374).

The second set of needs related to (experiences of) safety. Here, Maslow suggested that fears about one's physical environment, such as unstable households, motivated individuals to focus on their safety. Just as individuals needed to be satiated in terms of physiological needs, the need for safety was also motivating. When safety was not an issue (i.e., satiated), the individual would achieve equilibrium in this need.

The third need is one that has considerable resonance in today's motivational theorising. Maslow refers to this need as one focused on love (not sex), affection and belongingness. Later, when we discuss contemporary theorising, it will be easier to see how this need is represented across a range of theories.

The next need is the need for esteem. Maslow categorises esteem in two ways “*All people in our society (with a few pathological exceptions) have a need or desire for a stable, firmly based, (usually) high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others. By firmly based self-esteem, we mean that which is soundly based upon real capacity, achievement and respect from others.*” (p.381) The second is “... *what we may call the desire for reputation or prestige (defining it as respect or esteem from other people), recognition, attention, importance or appreciation.*” (p.381-382). Again, motivational theorists will see plenty of connections to familiar later theorising, and we will discuss these in more detail later.

The final need is self-actualisation. Here the definition is “...*It refers to the desire for self-fulfillment [sic], namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming.*” (p. 382).

This five-stage model of motivation has been visualised in an often-cited triangle (see examples in Figure 2), which has been useful in summarising the five needs parsimoniously.

<<<Figure 2 about here>>>

One further point is that Maslow categorised his needs into deficiency needs and growth needs. He suggested that motivation would decrease as the needs for physiological, safety, love/belonging and esteem needs were met, but that motivation would *increase* the more individuals were self-actualised.

It is also important to note that Maslow believed that nature determined behaviour far more than the environment. For example, Maslow stated that “*Each of us is endowed at birth with a complete, and, to some extent, unique complement of needs that, allowed expression by our environment will foster our growth in a healthy direction*” (see Neher, 1991, pp. 92-93, for

an extensive discussion; also Maslow, 1970b, pp. 62-72) suggesting that there were few genetic differences in us and that the environment largely determined our behaviour. As contemporary motivational theorising involves the crucial feature of individual differences, especially in terms of beliefs, I will explore how far nature and nurture may help explain motivated behaviour.

The question now is whether this model represents a useful (evidenced-based) theory of motivated behaviour, taking into account how the theory has developed in the last eighty years.

Mapping Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to Contemporary Theorising

One issue for all theories is the degree to which various elements are falsifiable. A good example are Maslow's first two elements, the physiological needs and the safety needs. For these first two basic needs, the word *chronic* (Maslow, 1943b, p. 374) is important. For individuals who are in such a state that their every waking moment is focused on securing food or safety, then it may be reasonable to suggest that needs further up the hierarchy are not motivating. However, it is not possible to test the claim that these needs are sequential (i.e., that you cannot attend to the need of safety when you are chronically hungry). Also, if we take the state of the world in terms of displacements of populations, it would not be unreasonable to think that some of these individuals would prefer safety over their hunger. I do not want to make light of these individuals and their plights, more that the sequential nature of these needs is probably questionable. To be fair, Maslow does offer a caveat to the hierarchical nature, stating that "*Emergency conditions are, almost by definition, rare in the normally functioning peaceful society.*" (Maslow, 1943b, p.374). Defining what counts as an emergency situation is less clear but in any case, I would welcome any indicative evidence or sets of arguments that support Maslow's claims.

It is when we come to the third need that there is considerable overlap with contemporary theorising. Maslow (1943a) suggested that individuals had a fundamental need for love, affection and belongingness. To examine this claim, it is useful to refer to Dweck's (2017) attempt to develop a unified theory of motivation because her thesis brings to the table a wide range of potential basic needs. (The inclusion of this paper is also a pragmatic choice to allow readers of this article who are unfamiliar with some of the theories to locate references for and read some of the most influential evidence in our field.) In her analysis, Dweck outlines a range of theorists who have posited forms of basic needs and argues that some of these needs are compounds or result from other needs. (p.690-691). Using some of her examples of basic needs, in chronological order, she cites Murray, 1938 (affection); Rank, 1945 (connectedness); Fromm, 1955 (relatedness); Harlow, 1958 (warmth, comfort); Rogers, 1961 (acceptance); Spitz, 1965 (affection, attachment); Bowlby, 1969 (attachment); Ainsworth, 1979 (attachment); Baumeister and Leary, McClelland, 1987 (affiliation); 1995 (belonging); Stevens and Fiske, 1995 (belonging) and Deci and Ryan, 2000 (relatedness). I refer you to her paper for the specifics of these various theories and how they relate to basic needs, but what is clear is that some of what Maslow was intimating as a basic need resonates with other theoretical positions, both pre and post his ideas.

Dweck's first need is the need for *acceptance*, which arises from the "*need for positive social engagement*" (p. 691). This definition aligns with Maslow's need for belongingness and alludes to the need for love and affection. Semantically, it could be argued that Maslow's belongingness is synonymous with Dweck's "need for positive engagement", and belongingness is essentially acceptance. However, there are many examples where the "need for positive engagement" is different to belongingness. For example, infants' preference for those who

imitate them (Meltzoff & Moore, 1977; see Jones, 2009, for a review) and studies that show infant distress when reciprocity with caregivers is interrupted (e.g., Ainsworth, 1969) suggest that belongingness belongs in a specific category that is different to other forms of acceptance.

A more persuasive argument is that what Dweck is alluding to when she talks about *acceptance* is what Maslow defines as “safety”. In defining the concept of safety, Maslow states that “*Confronting the average child with new, unfamiliar, strange, unmanageable stimuli or situations will too frequently elicit the danger or terror reaction, as for example, getting lost or even being separated from the parents for a short time, being confronted with new faces, new situations or new tasks, the sight of strange, unfamiliar or uncontrollable objects, illness or death.*” (Maslow, 1943b, p. 378). Here, Dweck is theoretically parcelling Maslow’s second (safety) and third order (belongingness) needs together which undermines the arguments of a hierarchy but supports the idea that these needs are important, albeit alongside a nexus of other types of needs.

Dweck adds two further basic needs. The second is the need for “*optimal predictability*” defined as “... the desire to know the relationships among events and among things in your world: what follows what, what belongs with what, or what causes what.” (p. 692). The third basic need is “competence” defined as “...*building skills for acting in or on the world.*” (p. 693). For example, the need for novelty and challenge have been examined and observed in a range of studies (e.g., Kidd, Piantadosi, & Aslin, 2012, Biederman & Vessel, 2006) and we only have to look at the work by Piaget (1936/1952) to see how he describes how children spontaneously seek new (optimal) challenge. The word “*predictability*” does not appear in Maslow’s (1943b) theorising.

Outside of Dweck's theorising, the concept of competence is ubiquitous in contemporary motivational research. For example, Self-Determination Theory posits that competence is a basic need (Deci & Ryan, 2000; see also Deci, 1972, for seminal theorising); Expectancy-value Theory suggests students' expectations are fundamental to their ongoing motivation, engagement and achievement (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, Eccles & Wigfield, 2020) and Achievement Goal theorists suggest that perceptions of competence determine the goals students adopt. These examples are popular theories, but Elliot and Dweck's (2005, see also Elliot, Dweck & Yeager, 2017) handbook includes most of the major theorists explaining (and evidencing) the role of competence in their theorising. Some of these theories do not cite competence as a basic need as SDT does, but it would be disingenuous to suggest that individuals have a need to display competence in some form. What is most interesting is that the word "competence" also does not appear in Maslow's (1943b) original thesis. Instead, the allusion to competence in his next category.

Maslow (1943b) suggests that "*All people in our society (with a few pathological exceptions) have a need or desire for a stable, firmly based, (usually) high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others. By firmly based self-esteem, we mean that which is soundly based upon real capacity, achievement and respect from others.*" (p. 381). To understand self-esteem, it is useful to understand two related concepts, self-worth and self-efficacy. Shavelson et al., (1976) define self-worth (SW) as a "person's perception of himself...formed through his experience with his environment...and influenced especially by environmental reinforcements and significant others" (p. 411). Self-efficacy (SEst) refers to an individual's subjective conviction in her or his capabilities to perform a specific task successfully to achieve a desired outcome (Bandura, 1977). Ah and Bong (2017) provide a useful

comparison between the three concepts where crucially, self-esteem and self-worth are categorised as stable traits whilst self-efficacy is categorised as malleable (Table 3.1, p. 66), that is, SEst and SW do not change much over time, but SE does. Conceptually, self-esteem and self-worth involve affective self-judgements about oneself e.g., how much people like themselves whereas SE may result in emotional response but a) they may not and b) these emotional responses are separate constructs ((Bong & Clark, 1999; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003).

The relevance of the comparison of these three concepts is firstly determining whether SE is really a basic need that is conceptually independent of SW or SEff. Ah and Bongs (2017) arguments suggests not in that SW and SEst both involve self-evaluations that produce emotional responses related to perceptions of evaluations by others. Some measures of self-efficacy do involve comparison with others (e.g., Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), Pintrich & Degroot, 1991) but many other measures of SEst simply focus on task relevant competence (e.g., Academic Self-Efficacy, Nielsen et al., 2018). If self-esteem is a basic need, then it is difficult to argue that self-worth and, in some cases, self-efficacy are not also basic needs. The issue is important because these different types of self predict different outcomes. For example, Marsh et al. (2006) found that mathematics, German, and English self-concepts were substantially positively related to their corresponding outcome measures i.e., achievement, whereas a global self-esteem measure was uncorrelated with them. It would be interesting to hear arguments that suggest why self-esteem is a basic need, but other forms of self are not.

The final component of Maslow's basic needs is self-actualisation. Here, we need to consider the difference between a need and a goal. Maslow suggested that self-actualisation was a goal e.g., *goal of identity (self-actualization...) seems to be simultaneously an end-goal in itself, and also a transitional goal, a rite of passage, a step along the path to the transcendence*

of identity. (Maslow, 1962/1998, p. 125). He links goals to needs, suggesting that “*An act [think of an act as a goal, my brackets] is psychologically important if it contributes directly to satisfaction of basic needs.*” (Maslow, 1943b, p. 384). In other words, the evidence that a need is a need comes from the goals that individuals pursue.

Recent evidence by Kaufman (2023) shows that his 30-item self-actualisation scale was positively related to satisfaction with relatedness, autonomy and competence and less negatively related to dissatisfaction with the same concepts. Kaufman (2023) concludes that along with other evidence reported in his study, “...*this total pattern of data supports Maslow’s (1950, 1962/1998) contention that self-actualized individuals are more motivated by growth and exploration than by fulfilling deficiencies in basic needs.*” (p. 71). Kaufman’s quote is slightly different from the one I have suggested by Maslow but both our claims amount to the same conclusion, that self-actualisation is a desired end state that serves the needs outlined in Maslow’s hierarchy. Without the needs of love, affection, belongingness, self-esteem, you cannot get to self-actualisation; it is these specific needs that create the goal of self-actualisation.

However, there are many goals that have similar basic needs as those outlined by Maslow. For example, achievement-goal theorists believe individuals are motivated to demonstrating competence (approach goals) or avoiding not showing competence (avoiding goals). Using a specific version of goal theory, individuals are either focused on trying to improve their understanding (mastery goals; see also Elliot, Murayama & Pekrun, 2011, for mastery as task-oriented and self-oriented) or demonstrating their ability to others (performance/another goal). Thus, it would be unreasonable to suggest that self-actualisation holds a specific end-state goal that arises from some of Maslow’s basic needs. Kaufman’s (2023) evidence helps support Maslow’s claims that Maslow’s basic needs are prerequisites for

self-actualisation. However, the more convincing argument is that Maslow's basic needs create a range of end-state goals, one of which could be self-actualisation.

In this section, the examination of Maslow's claims in relation to current theorising leads to three conclusions: a) it is moot whether physiological needs and safety needs are hierarchical, b) the need for belongingness is one part of a wide range of other similar basic needs c) whilst self-actualisation may be underpinned by Maslow's stated basic needs, these basic needs do not necessarily result in *just* self-actualisation.

What are our basic needs?

The next question is which of Maslow's needs are *the* basic needs. In this paper, I have alluded extensively to Dweck's (2017) attempt to unify motivational theory, especially in relation to identifying potential basic needs. The reason for this is mostly because Dweck's thesis recognises the significance of virtually every prominent motivation theory. Moreover, because she has been integral to the development of many theories (e.g., achievement goals, mindset theory) (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), her insights come from within the developmental frameworks rather than as an interested (outside) commentator. What Dweck's analysis suggests is that elements of Maslow's theory are part of the landscape of basic needs but are probably not *the* basic needs. For example, belongingness is part of a set of basic needs that comprise attachment, relatedness, love, affection and connectedness that make up the need for *acceptance*. (Dweck, 2017, p. 691). If these components are independent, then the appropriate conclusion is that belongingness, love and affection are part of larger basic need. The reader needs to examine Dweck's evidence to decide if they agree with this conclusion, but in terms of contemporary theorising, it is better to think of Maslow's set of basic needs as a necessary but not sufficient explanation of our basic needs.

The one need that Maslow does not mention specifically is the need for “competence”. It could be argued that Maslow’s explanation for self-esteem i.e., “*All people in our society...have a need or desire for a stable, firmly based, (usually) high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others.*” (Maslow, 1943b, p. 381) implicates perceptions of competence but the definitions of self-esteem focus more on being valued (evaluated highly) by others. It may be tautological that the search for self-esteem *is* the search for competence. If we consider, for example, competence in SDT, Deci and Ryan (2000) borrow White’s (1959) concept of *effectance* motivation, defined as “a propensity to have an effect on the environment as well as to attain valued outcomes within it.” (p. 231). Here, competence can be for its own sake, that is, satisfaction in achieving a level of competence in an activity one is trying to engage in. Here there is no external evaluation. Returning to the goal theorists, achievement goals which are grounded in perceptions of competence can be focused on non-other related outcomes. For example, mastery goals are goals that can be focused on performing well for oneself (see Dweck, 1986; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1997; Elliot & McGregor, 2001). Even later versions of mastery goals theorised that mastery could be focused on besting one’s previous score (self-focus) or just competing a task successfully (task-focus), see Elliot, Murayama & Pekrun, 2011). These examples strongly suggest that the competence that underpins self-esteem suggested by Maslow is very different to these mastery-types forms of competence-related needs. It is true we all have a level of self-esteem, and self-esteem may be created by perceptions of competence, but perceptions of competence drive other goals that are not self-esteem.

It is too simplistic to suggest that Maslow has misidentified the range of basic needs; it is more that in trying to create a succinct version of his theorising, his model has been over-

simplified. Readers familiar with the third edition version of *Motivation and Personality* (Maslow, 1970), which contains prefaces to both the second and third editions and revised by the authors, will appreciate the depth of arguments Maslow has engaged in to develop his theory. That said, his section on Hierarchy of Needs (pp. 56-61) remain much the same as the hierarchy first identified in 1943. My reading of the fundamental theorising in the third edition does not make me change the logic I have provided to date. I welcome counter arguments for those who have a different understanding of Maslow's arguments.

Why are we still citing Maslow?

For researchers interested in humanistic psychology, Maslow's theories have considerable appeal because of the inferred and evidence-based relationship between self-actualisation and well-being. Earlier, I discussed the recent work by Kaufman (2023), who demonstrated that Maslow's basic needs underpinned Kaufman's measure of self-actualisation. Moreover, when incorporating features of self-determination theory, self-actualisation was more strongly related to satisfaction with relatedness, competence and autonomy (see Table 8, p. 68). Maslow saw self-actualisation as something that aided well-being in that the more self-actualised someone was, the more likely they were to be aligned to positive forms of well-being. Kaufman's article provides a range of evidence this claim is supported. Mapping self-actualisation to measures of satisfaction and well-being seems an appropriate way to cite Maslow.

However, more often than not, the basic needs cited by Maslow are taken too literally and with little reference to more nuanced and developed arguments about the relationship between needs and goals. In this article, I have tried to set out the limitations of the basic needs identified by Maslow, the place that self-esteem fits into the picture (in terms of other self-theories and in

relation to needs and goals), and the types of competence that need to be considered when examining motivated behaviour. So, if your educator is NOT talking about the range of needs other than those cited by Maslow, they are failing in their remit to help you understand the motivational determinants of behaviour. Dweck's (2017) analysis serves many useful purposes. One does not have to agree with Dweck's analysis of what a unified theory of motivation should look like, but if you are not being taught about at least two of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and its six mini-theories, Expectancy Value Theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000; Eccles & Wigfield, 2020), Control Value theory (Pekrun, 2006) and/or Achievement-Goal Theory (Dweck, 1986; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996; Elliot & McGregor, 2001), then you are not really being given the tools you need to understand contemporary motivation theory. In truth, if your educator is citing Maslow in any more than a historical sense, they are more than likely unaware of developments in motivational theory.

Final thoughts

In researching the evidence that supports or refutes elements of Maslow's theorising, it is very easy to cherry-pick evidence, omit crucial arguments/evidence and misinterpret Maslow's aims and intentions. I suspect I am guilty of all of these. However, one of the benefits and points of an Open Dialogue is that readers can correct and challenge the claims I have made. The very purpose of this article is to *encourage* debate and argument. If everyone agrees with your thesis, then you have probably stated a truism.

For example, in re-reading my (countless) drafts, I am horrified that somehow, I have not included McClelland's work on the Achievement Motive (e.g., McClelland, Atkinson, Lowell & Clarke, 1953), a body of research of industrial proportions that, in part, fell out of the work by Maslow. The reason for non-inclusion of this august body of work is simply because I could not

see how it helped answer the question I am addressing. If that omission is an error, I welcome the arguments about why and how the work by McClelland should be included. Similarly, Maslow's theorising is wide-ranging and caveated so any selected quote potentially misrepresents the meaning. Again, I welcome corrections, reinterpretations and directions to the clarifying counter quote/argument.

It is also worth mentioning that the depth of motivational theorisation often precludes individuals from engaging in developments of argument and theory as deeply as they would like to. Members of the BPS Psychology of Education Section specialise in motivational theory and practice and are always willing to discuss ideas and take questions. We are happy to run workshops and give guest lectures, and members can ask for events to be put in their local area. The only way we can develop our understanding is to share our knowledge and, as I have done, put our arguments up for discussion.

Conclusion

Despite its popularity, when we examine Maslow's claims in relation to contemporary theorising, it is unlikely that the hierarchy of needs, certainly beyond the category of safety, act in a hierarchical way. It is also unlikely that self-actualisation is an over-arching need that arises from esteem. As for belongingness and love as basic needs, it seems that this may be true but really needs to be taken in context with a range of other needs. In this sense, Maslow is a limited theory to use when discussing the determinants of motivated behaviour. I would encourage readers to consider many of subsequent theories I have mentioned in this article.

However, when it comes to the concept of self-actualisation, there is good evidence that self-actualised individuals enjoy the benefits of well-being. What is less clear is whether the basic needs identified by Maslow are the only route to self-actualisation.

I'll finish with an analogy about why educators tend to cite Maslow when more sophisticated explanations are available. Person A sees another Person B looking for something late at night under a streetlight. Person A comes over and asks what Person B is doing. Person B says, "I'm looking for my keys". "Where do you think you lost them?" asks Person A. "Over there" says Person B pointing several yards away to part of the street where it is dark. "Why are you looking over here then?" asks a puzzled Person A. "Because this is where the light is" says Person B.

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Figure 1: Motivational Theories students say they are familiar with

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Name theories of motivation you think you know something about 13 / 13

learning approaches
social loafing?
expectancy theory
alderfer erg behm self perception
social motivation maslow's hierarchy
need for achievement maslow need hierarch
goal setting
theory x/y
maslow's hierarchy goals maslow hierarchy
maslow's theory mcclelland
acquired needs locus of control
social learning thry self determination
intrinsic/extrinsic operant conditioning
three needs theory selfdetermination
social determination hawthorne effect
extrinsic/intrinsic

Figure 2: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in pictorial form



