

Psychological and Educational Dimensions of Sustainability Planning

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IPAT. Impact= Population x Affluence x Technology. A commonly understood formula used to express the idea that environmental influence is the product of these three factors. The focus of our Love-Power Institute centers on **Affluence** and **Addictive Appetite**. Overpopulation is outside of our expertise, and we'll address technology in a [linked essay in the MAHB library](#). In today's blog we begin our exploration with *affluence* because it's not just affluence, but wealth disparity that actually has led to an *addictive appetite* among many humans for too many biospheric resources.

We agree that biosphere sustainability is most achievable through population control and reduction, wealth parity and appetite (greed) reduction, and intelligent management of technology. But despite our intellectual capacity to perceive this healthiest path, we're not making much progress yet. Our great hope for Darwinian survival and success as a species is to spread the MAHB's scientific consensus worldwide and develop a cultural revolution in attitudes, leading to compassionate democratic socialistic leadership of governments and industries in every corner of our globe. Our contribution here focuses on how to get from here to there.

The first aspect of our analysis is psychological. *The roots of wealth disparity and unemphatic corrupt political domination are **addiction to power**, which lie in **fear**.*¹ A Darwinian analysis of inborn human emotions during the paleolithic gender division of labor finds that socialization of

men to seek power over other stronger predators was adaptive. But today those power-, success-, wealth- and domination-hungry (mostly) men who use their intelligence, wealth, and persuasion for exploitation of our planet and control over other people, are the most dangerous predators driving us toward mass extinction of millions of living species, including ourselves.

Recent brain research has shown that people with an attitude of power cannot feel empathy², and the amygdala shuts down on empathy during fear³, as if survival were at stake. At present there seem to be so many other political systems fiercely attached to perpetuating control of wealth and power like America, that the Malthusian solution of genocidal resource warfare might be the most likely resolution to our downward cycle. But violence cannot be contained by the powerful, because even the most destructive weapons can be made or stolen by the dispossessed, and climate change knows no boundaries. *The resolution lies in human personality change instead.*

A Psychological Change Can Lead to Cultural Evolution

Contrary to the first century of Darwinian thinking, sociocultural evolution can precede and accelerate human biological evolution. The amazing neural plasticity of our brains allows for mass education and training to promote a more rapid adaptation to our present environmental crisis than we have ever imagined.

Historically, Freud accelerated human development when he insisted that unconscious aspects of our nature *can and should become conscious*,⁴ for then we may improve our animal nature by conscious trial and error. In the 1960s, fellow Darwinian Silvan Tomkins⁵ added to Freud's instinctual drives nine inborn affects (physiologically distinct emotions) and placed them inside Skinner's "black box" of the mind: **Stimulus** (from outside or memory) triggers **Affect** which centralizes, colors and drives **Responses** (as sense perceptions, thoughts and actions). The inborn emotions, like colored spotlights prioritizing input for attention and response, are interest/excitement, joy, surprise, fear, anger, distress/sorrow, shame, disgust and contempt. This "new" (1962-91) emotion-centric explanation of human personality offers tools for re-educating ourselves so we can improve the ways we relate to each other as women and men and even *open up our eyes and hearts* to the world around us.

Power Motivated Men Meet Up With Love Motivated Women

Paleolithic female socialization for *love and nurturance* involved surrendering to coexisting in the other person's (or animal's) *empathic world*. Female tending of relationships has always provided humans with superior sustainability in tribes. Women's inclusive empathic ways are still essential today for managing the biosphere, while the more egocentric exclusive male power drive must be curbed and guided by female expertise in nurturant love. Today our

warlike male nationalist backlash against sharing our temperate region and resources with those already damaged by our climate crisis has led more women to assume leadership and thus to wield more power, previously monopolized by men.

Can enough men “swallow their pride” sufficiently to share decision-making power with women and even choose nurturance over wealth-predation as focus for action? A cultural revolution in personality is needed to make this choice the new normal for both sexes. This is what the *Love Power Institute* seeks fellow thinking, feeling pioneers to join us to develop and teach. (See Part 2 in the MAHB Library, “Growing through Silicon Valley” for details of an educational plan.)

We can increase conscious awareness of basic emotions, and we have catalogued many *emotional dynamics of love*⁶ so we can develop more conscientious management of these. We’re exploring the *emotional dynamics of power*, so the sexes can compare their satisfactions and explore typical differences: e.g. women are more collaborative and aware of fear.

In a nutshell, both sexes need to become more conscious of and embrace emotional dynamics of both love and power so we can conscientiously manage them rather than having them unconsciously driving us or scaring us away. In general, more men need to work on loving and more women need to work on power. But at least men and perhaps also women may fear losing power and wealth, because they are both addictive. So, our approach to working with awareness and dynamics of power employs *empathic contact*⁷ between the sexes, for empathy can be taught.

Empathy as both Means and End

Empathizing is a major component of mothering and love. An empathic listener needs to feel and express the *same emotions* as the speaker, though less intensely. Since they normally feel and express more types of emotions women have greater mastery of empathy. Men can learn it from women. By sharing many of their most challenging stories of less often expressed feelings with each other, both men and women can extend their emotional repertoires and gain greater understanding and even admiration of each other.

Since empathy is one of the key emotional dynamics of love, practicing it in trainings literally plants the seeds of love and builds the skills for durable emotional intimacy between the sexes. So is it time to play the theme music, since everybody will be walking off to live happily ever after?

Not so fast. It will take immense psychological education to modernize human nature, requiring thousands of educators! Would anybody want to interrupt their too-busy lives for such a radical reeducation? Furthermore, making what’s been unconscious for all of human history conscious is bound to release *too much emotion*, the very definition of human distress-panic-attack.

Today's human ostrich posture to avoid awareness of onrushing global degradation is already instinctive withdrawal from this monstrous **fear and distress** overload.

But the potential of conscious mastery over emotional dynamics of both love and power offers a **path of hope**. And the path to thousands of avatars and teachers for spreading cultural evolution throughout the world could lead through Silicon Valley social media companies. [Read more about this in Part 2 of our MAHB essays.](#)

Norman Brown and Marsha Hudson are retired professors and practitioners of psychotherapy and humanities who founded the Love-Power Institute, a nonprofit corporation with plans to pursue these trainings. By sharing their work with the MAHB, they hope to interest others in continuing the conversation around the dynamics of love and power and joining them to build a training force for spreading love and power dynamics as well as empathy for the biosphere worldwide, especially to those who would lead industries and governments.

The [MAHB Blog](#) is a venture of the Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere. Questions should be directed to joan@mahbonline.org

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