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HUMAN NEEDS AND DEVELOPMENTAL THEMES: A CONCEPTUAL COMPARISON OF MASLOW'S HIERARCHY AND JAN SCHOLTEN'S PERIODIC TABLE INTERPRETATION IN HOMOEOPATHIC MATERIA MEDICA

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ABSTRACT

Background: Students of Materia Medica often meet the psychological themes of remedies without a structured way of thinking about human motivation. Jan Scholten's reading of the Periodic Table gives homoeopathy a developmental scheme for elemental remedies, while Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs gives psychology a well-known account of how human priorities are ordered.

Aim: To compare the two frameworks conceptually and examine whether Maslow's language of needs can serve as a teaching aid for Scholten's series themes.

Method: Narrative conceptual analysis based on Maslow (1943, 1954, 1971) and Scholten (1996). Selected Maslow levels were set beside Scholten's series, and each pairing was justified and critically examined.

Discussion: Partial thematic parallels were found for existence, safety, relationship, competence, creative potential and wider purpose. The parallels are loose and the two sequences do not follow the same order. Neither framework has been empirically validated as a model for choosing remedies.

Conclusion: The comparison is useful as a reflective and educational tool that prompts students to ask which need is driving a patient's experience. It is an analogy only. It is not a validated classification and must not be used as a basis for remedy selection.

KEYWORDS: Periodic Table; homoeopathic Materia Medica; Jan Scholten; Maslow's hierarchy of needs; human motivation.

1. INTRODUCTION

People act for many reasons. Some needs press on us immediately, such as hunger, safety and rest. Others develop more slowly and are more personal: the wish to be loved, to be respected, to do work that matters, and to belong to something larger than ourselves. These needs colour how a person reads a situation, forms relationships and builds an identity. Psychology has long asked why people pursue the goals they do, and why two people can respond to the same event in very different ways.

One of the best-known answers was proposed by Abraham Maslow in 1943. He argued that human needs are arranged by priority, so that pressing basic needs tend to claim attention before higher aspirations do [1]. The idea later became widely popularised as a pyramid running from physiological needs at the base to self-actualization at the top.

Homoeopathy has its own tradition of organising psychological themes. In *Homoeopathy and the Elements*, Jan Scholten reads the Periodic Table as a developmental map. The rows (series) and columns (stages) are taken to carry themes, so that an element's position points to the theme of its remedy [2].

The two systems come from different disciplines, yet both deal with growth, individuality, responsibility and fulfilment. This paper asks whether the language of human needs can be used alongside Scholten's series to help students discuss these themes. We do not claim that an element's chemistry determines human psychology, or that the two frameworks are scientifically equivalent. The comparison is offered as a theoretical analogy for teaching and discussion.

2. METHODS

This is a conceptual comparison and not an empirical study. The primary sources were Maslow's original paper and books [1,3,4] and Scholten's *Homoeopathy and the Elements* [2] Supporting critical literature on Maslow's model was drawn from Koltko-Rivera [5] , Wahba and Bridwell [6] and Tay and Diener [7]. Each Maslow level was matched with the Scholten series whose stated theme most closely resembled it. A short reason was recorded for each pairing, and points where the two frameworks diverge were noted.

3. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow described needs as differing in *prepotency*. When a basic need is largely unmet, it tends to dominate attention and behaviour ahead of higher aims. His original paper named five categories. He also acknowledged individual variation and exceptions, and did not suggest that everyone follows the same order in every circumstance [1,3].

Physiological needs cover the requirements of life itself: food, water, air and rest. For a person who is severely hungry, finding food usually outweighs recognition or achievement. The guiding question is *what is required to survive?*

Safety needs include protection, stability and predictability. They extend beyond physical danger to secure income, dependable relationships and an orderly environment. A person who has lived through repeated upheaval may value a steady job or a secure home above almost everything else. The guiding question is *am I safe and secure?*

Love and belonging involve affection, friendship, intimacy and membership of a group. Acceptance builds connection, while rejection and isolation cause distress. Professional success does not remove loneliness: a person may be respected at work and still feel alone. The guiding question is *where do I belong?*

Esteem is the need to feel capable, valued and respected, both in one's own eyes and in the eyes of others. Seeking recognition is not the same as having stable self-esteem, because heavy dependence on outside praise can sit alongside deep self-doubt. The guiding question is *am I capable and valued?*

Self-actualization is the drive to realise one's potential. It should not be confused with wealth or status, since it can take many forms, such as research, art, teaching or service. The guiding question is *what can I become?*

In later writing, Maslow discussed **self-transcendence**, an orientation towards goals beyond personal fulfilment [4]. It was absent from the 1943 formulation but is often drawn as a sixth level (see Koltko-Rivera [5] for a discussion of the later version). Here it is treated as an additional point of comparison and not as a required final step.

4. Scholten's Interpretation of the Periodic Table

The Periodic Table arranges elements by atomic structure and recurring chemical properties. Scholten uses an element's position in the table to explore the themes of its remedy. He describes two organising dimensions. **Series** are the horizontal rows, each linked to a general theme. **Stages** are the vertical columns, which show where an element stands within the

unfolding of that theme. The series are also presented as phases of a larger developmental spiral [2].

The series themes relevant to this paper are:

- **Hydrogen series:** being, the emergence of existence and a sense of self.
- **Carbon series:** the body, physical existence and embodiment.
- **Silicium series:** the other, relationship with people and with the surrounding environment.
- **Ferrum series:** work, responsibility, productive activity and one's role in a wider setting.
- **Silver series:** ideas, thought, intellectual activity and the development of concepts.
- **Gold series:** leadership, the organisation of responsibility and the use of authority.
- **Uranium series:** the larger whole, a perspective reaching beyond individual concerns.

Because an element's meaning comes from its stage within its series, one theme can be lived in several ways. Leadership, for example, may appear as growing responsibility, as the exercise of power, or as difficulty in guiding others. In Scholten's scheme, series and stages therefore work together as one interpretive system. They are a homoeopathic reading of the table and not chemical findings about psychology, and they are not a classification of human needs.

Scope note: Stages describe the position of an element within its series and are central to how a specific remedy is interpreted. Because this paper compares broad themes and not individual remedies, it deliberately limits itself to the series and leaves a stage-level comparison for future work.

5. A Conceptual Comparison

The two models ask different questions. Maslow asks what drives behaviour and how the priority of needs shifts. Scholten asks what theme an element's position suggests for its remedy. Even so, both can be discussed through broad ideas such as existence, security, relationship, responsibility, individuality and fulfilment.

Table 1 sets out the pairings considered, with the reasoning for each.

Table 1. Exploratory comparison of Maslow's levels and selected Scholten series.

Maslow's level	Related Scholten series	Rationale for the pairing
Physiological needs	Hydrogen (being); Carbon (the body)	Both concern basic existence and the physical self.
Safety needs	Carbon (the body); Silicium (the other, including the surrounding environment)	Security involves protecting the body and feeling stable in one's surroundings and relationships.
Love and belonging	Silicium (the other)	Belonging and the significance of other people are central to both.
Esteem	Ferrum (work); Gold (leadership)	Competence and responsibility parallel Ferrum, while recognition and authority parallel Gold.
Self-actualization	Silver (ideas)	Realising one's potential through creativity and thought parallels the theme of ideas.
Self-transcendence	Uranium (the larger whole)	Concern for purposes beyond the self parallels a perspective beyond individual interests.

Note. This table is an interpretive comparison developed for this paper. It is not part of Maslow's theory and it is not a validated mapping within Scholten's system.

The pairings are discussed below in four groups.

Existence, the body and security. Physiological needs are the most direct starting point for a discussion of motivation. Scholten's themes of being and the body give language for existence and embodiment. Safety needs add the question of continuity: whether a person feels stable, protected and placed securely in the world. In Scholten's scheme this wider sense of surroundings sits with the Silicium series, which is why safety is paired with both Carbon and Silicium.

Belonging and the other. Maslow stresses the value of affection and group membership, while Scholten's theme of the other draws attention to how a person relates to those around them. The two ideas meet at relationship, but each draws its meaning from its own framework, and one should not be read as a restatement of the other.

Esteem, work and leadership. Esteem includes competence, self-regard and acknowledgement. Work corresponds to competence and responsibility, and leadership to authority and social recognition. A person seeking promotion may be after security, status, acknowledgement or the chance to make a difference. Comparing the models helps separate the *role* a person takes on from the *need* that role serves, since several needs can lie behind the same behaviour.

Self-actualization and transcendence. Self-actualization concerns the growth of one's own potential, shown through art, teaching, service or many other activities. The Silver series offers vocabulary for ideas and creative capacity, but no framework can show how far a particular person has actualized. Self-transcendence, an orientation beyond personal interests, can be set beside the Uranium series. It is not always the final stage of development.

6. DISCUSSION

The comparison shows that both frameworks can be read as describing different aspects of human growth, from basic survival through relationship and responsibility to wider purpose. Its main value lies in the questions it raises. Asking which need seems most pressing in a given situation, and whether the same behaviour could arise from different needs, may encourage Materia Medica students to read psychological material more carefully and in context.

The two frameworks must still be kept apart. Both use developmental language, but that does not mean they describe the same process. The Periodic Table is organised by chemical principles and not by human needs, so the psychological meanings attached to elements belong to Scholten's interpretation alone.

The correspondence is also not one-to-one, and it does not preserve order. In Table 1, Silver (ideas) is paired with self-actualization and Gold (leadership) with part of esteem. In Scholten's sequence, however, the Silver series comes *before* the Gold series, whereas in Maslow's hierarchy esteem comes *before* self-actualization. The sequences therefore run in opposite directions at this point. This is one reason to treat the pairings as thematic echoes and not as a ladder in which each level matches a series.

Limitations

1. Maslow's model is usually drawn as a strict pyramid, yet motivation is more complex. Studies examining the hierarchy have produced mixed results on whether needs follow a fixed order, and cross-cultural evidence suggests that people can pursue meaningful work or belonging while still materially insecure [6,7].

2. Scholten's model has also not been empirically validated. Its themes arise from his interpretation of homoeopathic sources and clinical experience. Pairing one unvalidated scheme with a critiqued theory gives a hypothesis-generating analogy, not evidence.

3. The pairings in Table 1 are the authors' own judgement and have not been tested for agreement among independent readers.

4. One Scholten theme may speak to several needs, and one need may be expressed through several themes.
5. A psychological need does not establish a remedy indication. Any clinical use of this comparison would require separate, properly designed testing.

For these reasons, a flexible comparison is easier to defend than a rigid table that assigns one series to every level. Future work could examine inter-rater agreement on the pairings, extend the comparison to stages, and gather student feedback on its teaching value.

7. CONCLUSION

Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Scholten's Periodic Table interpretation are distinct frameworks that can be brought into careful conceptual dialogue. Themes of existence, relationship, responsibility, individuality and fulfilment provide a basis for comparison, and the resulting analogy may help Materia Medica students think more clearly about human needs. Its worth lies in the questions it raises and not in any presumed correspondence between psychological needs and chemical elements. It is not a validated classification and must not be used as a basis for remedy selection.

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