The Constitution of Culture:
A Complexity and Psychoanalytic Theory Approach



by
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**Abstract**

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This thesis uses a hermeneutic approach to examine what culture is from the perspectives of complexity theory, object relations theory, and self psychology. Nurturation, a framework that examines the constitution of culture, is highlighted in the findings. Nurturation proposes that culture is the field that people, as interdependent entities, co-create by virtue of being interdependent. The manner in which this human field operates is primarily through the patterns of connectedness that are expressed. This field affects people's individuation potential, and its constitution is found to perpetuate this potential, the more so at lower levels of development. Empirical validation is tentative. The epistemological approach of attachment theory is found to have potential in providing empirical support.

**Acknowledgments**

I am grateful to all the people who have touched my life directly or indirectly; first among them are my children, without whom I would not be who I am today.

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**Chapter I**
**Introduction**

**Area of Interest**

I remember the exhilaration I felt when I visited another country by myself for the first time. This was an experience of freedom, discovery, and relatedness. The freedom came from experiencing a social structure with which I was not enmeshed. The discovery was the discovery of an otherness that, in the end, is also the discovery of one's own culture. The relatedness came from the witnessing of, and immersion in, unusual patterns of relatedness. The unusual patterns made my innate patterns of relatedness rise to consciousness—particularly since the new experience was not traumatic. This greater awareness, I want to believe, contributed to my individuation (in the sense of psychological development).

Experiencing another culture therefore had, for me, an individuation flavor, even though I did not realize it at the time. This aspect of individuation was reinforced for me when the experience of a new culture not only brought awareness, as mentioned above, but also elements of relatedness that may have been missing from my previous environments. This led me to live in four different cultures, in addition to my native culture, each of which has provided me with different riches.

Culture has therefore been of importance for me because of the positive effects I experienced and their positive relation to my individuation. More generally, I suspect that culture may be life-giving. The manner in which a culture's practices allow for the

growth and allocation of food among its member, or the provision of medical care influences whether one can live, and how long. Culture can also generate regression in its wake. This awareness arose for me during previous graduate-level international relations studies, during which I ended up perceiving war, perhaps the ultimate form of regression, as a product of culture. Culture is life-giving and life-taking.

**Guiding Purpose**

I am interested in understanding culture. Can we say more beyond that it exists? How does it emerge? What is its influence? How does it change? Further away, can a refined understanding of culture give us a sense of what we may hope for with regard to our individuation as human beings?

**Rationale**

The question of culture, and the underlying and related aspects of psychological development, is one of awareness of where we came from and where we may be going. This question seeks an understanding of our place in the world; how we have been shaped by it; how, on a smaller scale, we are shaping it; and what we can hope for for our children. It is also my hope that this work will provide a better understanding of the Other (that which seems to be different from self).

**Methodology**

**Research problem.** As is probably the case for anyone who has lived in different countries, I have experienced culture as a felt sense. I have not, however, come across literature on culture that resonates with that sense. I have encountered literature that addresses the existence of culture or the notion of culture and of its people as mutual co-creations, but I have not found research that examines the specific qualities and textures

of culture as I have experienced them. On a broader level, an explanation of culture that could satisfactorily account for issues of war and peace and be compatible with my felt sense of culture has been missing from the theories of international relations I came across (e.g., Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 2000; Nau, 2011), even those that recognized some form of distribution of identity in the international system as an independent variable (e.g., Huntington, 1998; Nau, 2002).

**Research question.** I juxtapose the felt sense I experienced with an orientation toward humanism, an attraction to depth psychology, and a curiosity about complexity theory—the notion that complex phenomena may arise from the interaction of relatively simple entities (Waldrop, 1992). I seek to understand culture from these perspectives. My understanding of depth psychology is that psychoanalytic theory—specifically object relations theory and self psychology—may allow me to speak humanistically to the notion of culture within a complexity theory framework. I therefore attempt to provide elements of an answer to the following question: What is culture within the context of complexity theory from a psychoanalytic perspective?

**Chosen methodology.** My research is theoretical in nature. The goal is the construction of a concept of culture informed by placing in dialogue elements of psychoanalytic theory within a complexity framework. I therefore use a hermeneutic methodology:

> Traditional hermeneutics involves the search for meaning in and between different contexts including texts, stories people tell about themselves, films, and art. Hermeneutic methodology places concepts in dialogue with one another to look for deeper meaning through exploring their relationships to each other and involves the comparative study of various source materials. (Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2012, p. 52)

It consists of an "analysis of text-based data. It involves analyzing texts to extract central themes, form connections, and possibly to construct a fresh theory or some unprecedented way of understanding the topic" (Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2012, p. 41). In actuality, the dialogue is also informed by my sensitivities and biases, so my methodology is also informed by heuristics:

> Heuristic research encourages relationship and connectedness rather than detachment. In heuristic research, a particular phenomenon in the researcher's personal experience is explored over time. The approach is more autobiographical than found in phenomenological research, and the researcher usually is personally *called* to the topic. Heuristic research seeks immediacy and meaning. The researcher then synthesizes the experience and writes about the structure and meaning of the entire study. (Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2012, p. 53)

**Participants and materials.** No study of participants is involved. The materials are the works listed in the references section.

**Procedures.** I intend to put in dialogue elements of psychoanalytic theory informed by my understanding of complexity theory within the context of my sensitivities and biases, thereby trying to make explicit and elaborate upon some of my preconceived, implicit, nonverbal understandings.

**Limitations.** The first set of limitations in this work is linked to the reductionism in which I am engaging. This is mostly a theoretical piece. As such, it simplifies a reality that is too complex for me to grasp. Another limitation is that linked to blinders and biases that I may have. One blinder is my orientation toward humanism. This orientation dictates my choice to start with psychoanalytic theory and my engagement with the different elements of the subject. I know that I have other blinders, but—such is the nature of blinders—their qualities are not evident to me. An additional limitation comes from the relative narrow breadth of materials I have examined (particularly in the

literature review portion of this writing, where, for the sake of manageability, I have examined only a few selected materials).

**Ethical Concerns**

I envision two sets of ethical considerations. The first one, common, I assume, to all works, is the possibility that what is proposed is wrong and that its application may generate harm. The second one is based on the possibility that this writing will be relevant but used for unethical purposes. A specific concern I have is that this writing may embolden some readers to engage in cultural comparisons not based on mutual respect and from there slip to denigration, with its implicit attempt at domination.

**Overview of Thesis**

The readings about culture I have come across from the depth psychology, cultural psychology, and sociology perspectives have lacked an understanding of cultural change beyond a generic assertion that change is the result of some historical circumstances. We do have tools to understand change at the level of the individual in a rich way—I am oriented toward object relations theory and self psychology. I am not aware, however, of the existence of corresponding tools to understand culture with a similar richness. I believe that this lacuna can be remedied by the use of psychoanalytic theory in a context informed by complexity theory. I am directed to the notion in complexity theory that the putting together of interdependent units leads to emerging systemwide properties (Waldrop, 1992, p. 82).

I proceed by first proposing a simplified description of individuals informed by object relations theory and self psychology. I then theorize about the emerging properties that arise from putting such individuals together, how these properties (which I define as

culture) and individuals co-constitute each other, and what is involved in change. I come to the conclusion that culture is the relational field of individuation potential that we, humans, co-create by the virtue of interacting with each other. I also offer some modest hope that the individuation potential of this field may increase over time. This is not a deterministic framework. All I am proposing are modest, little-quantified probabilities of potentialities (which are themselves probabilities and little quantified).

**Chapter II**
**Literature Review**

**Lineage**

The subject of culture is vast. For the purpose of manageability, this thesis examines four sets of writings. The first two emanate from the depth psychology tradition. *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Freud, 2011) came from the Freudian perspective and viewed culture as a construct we build to protect each other against aggression. Out of the analytical psychology lineage came *The Cultural Complex* (Singer & Kimbles, 2004), which considered culture as an archetypal historical object residing in the individual. The next two works reviewed in this thesis come from sociology. In his *Rules of the Sociological Method*, Emile Durkheim (1982), a sociologist, posited culture's social facts as the factor explaining human actions. Anthony Giddens (1984), also a sociologist, presented his structuration theory in *The Constitution of Society*, in which he posited individuals and culture as co-constituting each other. Included below is an outline of my understanding of social psychology and cultural psychology. Social psychology is acultural and therefore of little direct relevance. It serves as a basis, however, for cultural psychology, which examines how culture influences specific discrete human stimulus responses.

**Depth Psychology**

**Civilization and its discontents.** Sigmund Freud (2011), considered the father of psychoanalysis, saw culture as the confluence of several factors, as outlined in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. One of these factors is related to "the child's feeling of

helplessness and the longing it evokes for a father" (Freud, 2011, p. 21) as well as the need for religion that this feeling invites. Relatedly, the notion of oceanic feeling comes into play. Many people experience an oceanic feeling: "a sensation of 'eternity,' a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded . . . a purely subjective experience, not an article of belief" (Freud, 2011, p. 8). Freud (2011) further explained this sensation as a "feeling of oneness with the universe which [in] its ideational content sounds very like . . . another way taken by the ego of denying the dangers it sees threatening it in the external world" (p. 21). This oceanic feeling "is the source of the religious spirit and is taken hold of by the various Churches and religious systems, directed by them into definite channels and also, no doubt, used up in them" (Freud, 2011, p. 8).

Concurrently, humans build civilization also for "a measure of security" (Freud, 2011, p. 92). Culture comes into being as a means "of protecting humanity against nature and of regulating the relations of human beings among themselves" (Freud, 2011, p. 50). Indeed, Freud posited that "human life in communities only becomes possible when a number of men unite together in strength superior to any single individual and remain united against all single individuals" (Freud, 2011, p. 59). The existence of a "tendency to aggression which we can detect in ourselves and rightly presume to be present in others is the factor that disturbs our relations with our neighbors and makes it necessary for culture to institute its high demands" (Freud, 2011, p. 86). At the same time, because civilization requires sacrifices of one's aggressive tendencies, humans have great difficulty feeling happy with it (Freud, 2011, p. 91).

**The cultural complex.** Carl Jung, the founder of analytical psychology, was interested in culture and traveled to the Americas, Africa, and Asia (Singer & Kimbles,

2004, p. 3). However, the Jungian tradition has historically not focused on culture.

Rather, it has focused on the individual as a discrete entity, linked to fellow human

beings primarily at the archetypal level through the collective unconscious: These are the

universally held archaic patterns, behaviors, and imaged shared across the human species

(Kirsch, 2004, p. 185). According to Thomas Singer and Samuel Kimbles (2004),

Jungian analysts, this may have been due to Jung's "natural introversion (and his appeal

to other introverts) and his fundamental focus on individuation [and an] unacknowledged

tendency to set the individual up against or in opposition to the life of the group" (p. 4).

They commented that the "tendency for collective life to fall into the Jungian shadow has

done a great disservice to the tradition of analytical psychology and its potential to

contribute to a better understanding of group forces in the psyche" (Singer & Kimbles,

2004, p. 4). Singer and Kimbles proposed a cultural complex, which they partially

defined as

> arising out of the cultural unconscious as it interacts with both the archetypal and
> personal realms of the psyche and the broader outer world arena of schools,
> communities, media, and all the other forms of cultural and group life. As such,
> cultural complexes can be thought of as forming the essential components of inner
> sociology. [This sociology] is a description of groups and classes of people as
> filtered through the psyches of generations of ancestors. It has all sorts of
> information and misinformation about the structures of societies—a truly, inner
> sociology—and its essential building blocks are cultural complexes. (pp. 4-5)

The cultural complex derives its traction from the notion that

> one can easily imagine how the individual's ego can identify with a cultural
> complex as a defense against a more painful and isolating personal complex. It is
> far easier to split off one's individual suffering (or to see it all as a result of group
> trauma) and get caught up in a mass movement than it is to carry the burden of
> one's individual pain. (Singer, 2004, p. 21)

In this way, "Cultural complexes generate moods in national groups in the same way that

an activated personal complex can fuel conflicted dreams in an individual" (San Roque,

2004, p. 48). Cultural complexes can therefore be revealed "at locations of conflict between cultural groups" (San Roque, 2004, p. 48).

Having defined the cultural complex, different authors went on to examine different examples of cultural complexes. Jacqueline Gerson (2004), a Jungian analyst, described *malinchismo*, the Mexican cultural complex that consists in disliking one's own. Manisha Roy (2004), a Jungian analyst, looked at Puritanism, the cultural complex fueled by a "repressed religious archetype, namely, the God-image of perfection [and] a dominant force that underlies the American approach to life's problems" (p. 75). Toshio Kawai (2014), a Jungian analyst, saw a dissociation in Japan "between the mythological world and postmodern consciousness" as an emerging cultural complex (p. 98). Denise Ramos (2004), a Jungian analyst, identified a "Brazilian cultural complex of inferiority," which she traced to Brazil's "creation myth, foreigners' projections, slavery and colonization" (p. 118) and the consequences of which he perceived as being corruption in Brazil (p. 112). Andrew Samuels (2004), a professor of analytical psychology, posited a "cultural complex of Western psychotherapy" that includes a "claim to universality [and] the power . . . residing in the therapist creating a superior-inferior dance" (p. 134). Astrid Berg (2004), a Jungian analyst, discussed *ubuntu*, "the spirit of fellowship, humanity, and compassion" associated with Africa (p. 244). Furthermore, Part III of *The cultural complex* (Singer & Kimbles, 2004) book includes examples of how specific patients bring their expression of their own cultural complex into the therapy room (Kimbles, 2004; Morgan, 2004).

Change is touched upon by these authors, albeit briefly: "The process of individuation in the group is to think of it as the gradual working through and integration

of the group's core cultural complexes over its lifetime—which may be generation upon generation" (Singer & Kimbles, 2004, p. 237). "Change will occur only when the underlying conflicts are painfully faced" (Ramos, 2004, p. 121).

**Social Psychology and Cultural Psychology**

    **Social psychology.** Social psychology is of limited relevance to this paper. Social psychology assumes that humans follow a set of discrete, concrete, linear stimulus responses that are consistent across time and space (Ditto, 2005). These responses are inferred from experiments in which the reactions of participants, often undergraduate students, are observed across engineered situations. Examples include obedience in the laboratory (Milgram, 1963), where participants were induced to send what they believed to be real electric shocks to another individual; conformity (Asch, 1955), in which participants influenced by the expressed opinion of others grossly misjudged the length of lines; and cognitive dissonance (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959), where participants experimenting with two or more contradictory beliefs strove to deny one of their beliefs to reduce internal inconsistency. Although it assumes that social influence exists, social psychology is ontologically based on the principle that that influence is uniform across space and time (Ditto, 2005).

    **Cultural psychology.** Although social psychology is not oriented toward examining how social environments vary across space (or time), it has, however, some indirect influence on the study of culture: Some of its main features are used as a foundation for cultural psychology (Knowles, 2009). Like social psychology, cultural psychology assumes that humans follow a set of discrete, concrete, linear stimulus responses, which are inferred from experiments in which the reactions of participants,

often undergraduate students, are observed across engineered situations. Cultural

psychology, however, adds an ontological twist: There is such a thing as culture;

therefore, subjects may have different responses depending on their culture. Accordingly,

what is of interest is not the mean of the dependent variable for the whole group of

sampled subjects. Rather, what is of interest are the means of the dependent variable for

subjects grouped by their cultural background.

Examples of studies include examining the impact that one's culture has on one's

sense of self as independent versus interdependent (Markus & Kitayama, 1991);

comparing the need for positive self-regard in North American culture versus Japanese

culture (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999); comparing how American and

Chinese people emphasize individual-dispositional versus situational causes to events

(Morris & Peng, 1994; Peng & Knowles, 2003); comparing preferences for formal versus

intuitive reasoning between European American, Chinese, and Korean individuals

(Norenzayan, Smith, Kim, & Nisbett, 2002); and comparing American and Chinese eye

movements during scene perception (Chua, Boland, & Nisbett, 2005).

**Sociology**

Psychology focuses on the individual, and it has been glancing at culture as one of

the several phenomena affecting the individual. Sociology, on the other hand, is primarily

concerned with societal phenomena and has historically been based on the assumption

that there is little individual autonomy.

**Social facts.** In *Rules of the Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology*

*and Its Method*, Durkheim (1895) proposed a unilateral causation between individuals

and their society. He posited social facts as

> any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint; or which is general over the whole of a given society whilst having an existence of its own, independent of its individual manifestations. (p. 59)

Social facts "are endued with a compelling and coercive power by virtue of which, whether [the individual] wishes it or not, they impose themselves upon him" (Durkheim, 1982, p. 51). Social exclusion or negative financial market driven forces are examples of coercive causality (Durkheim, 1982, p. 51).

Social facts are pervasive. As "the phenomena that occur within society," they cover all human occurrence (Durkheim, 1982, p. 50). Indeed, according to Durkheim (1982), "We are the victims of an illusion which leads us to believe we have ourselves produced what has been imposed upon us externally" (p. 53). Although Durkheim proposed an explanation for the evolution of social facts, the complexity is such that social facts may be de facto considered as given.

> Society does not create its organization by itself alone; it receives it in part ready-made from preceding societies. . . . One cannot explain a social fact of any complexity save on condition that one follows its entire development throughout all social species. (Durkheim, 1982, pp. 156-157)

Individuals, for Durkheim, are the product of their social time, not the other way around.

**Structuration theory.** Some political psychologists contend that although a sociological approach, such as Durkheim's, has the merit of shedding some light on macrophenomena that constrain individuals, individuals also have some level of agency. Any approach that privileges either the individual or the sociological is, in that light, misguided. A dual structuration approach is needed: an approach that examines the "complex relationship between the individual structuring of meaning and action on the

one hand and the collective structuring of meaning and action on the other" (Rosenberg, 2003, p. 434).

In *The Constitution of Society*, Giddens (1984) proposed a "structuration theory." Giddens contended both that individuals have agency and that society imposes structure and proposed an explanation as to how the two are linked. Giddens started first with agency, which he defined as follows:

> Agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place (which is why agency implies power . . . ). Agency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently. . . . Action is a continuous process, a flow, in which the reflexive monitoring which the individual maintains is fundamental to the control of the body that actors ordinarily sustain throughout their day-to-day lives. (p. 9)

Consistent with his view of agency, Giddens saw individuals as primarily guided by the rationalization of action, which he defined as "the capability competent actors have of 'keeping in touch' with the grounds of what they do, as they do it, such that if asked by others, they can supply reasons for their activities" (p. 376). A depth psychological approach, upon which this paper is based, is of little relevance in this model. Giddens did mention the need for ontological security—which he described as an "autonomy of bodily control within predictable routines and encounters" (p. 64), but overall, "the unconscious only rarely impinges directly upon the reflexive monitoring of conduct" (Giddens, 1984, p. 50).

Giddens (1984) then defined structure, as "the structuring properties allowing the 'binding' of time-space in social systems, the properties which make it possible for discernibly similar social practices to exist across spans of time and space and which lend them 'systemic' form" (p. 17). Although he started with a conventional definition of structure, from a sociological standpoint, Giddens went on to lay the basis for linking

structure and agency. Structure, "as recursively organized set of rules and resources, is out of time and space, save in its instantiation and co-ordination as memory traces, and is marked by an 'absence of subject'" (Giddens, 1984, p. 25).

Having presented his notion of agency and structure, Giddens (1984) proposed that the two are linked in the following manner:

> The constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality. According to the notion of duality of structure, the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize. Structure is not "external" to individuals: as memory traces, and as instantiated in social practices, it is in a certain sense more "internal" than exterior to their activities in a Durkheimian sense. Structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling. (p. 25)

Having established that structures are instantiated in and by agents, not agency-deprived humans, Giddens rejected the structure-only view and stated:

> We can't make any sense of social life without something like the view that I am taking. I don't see what the alternative is. I can see failed alternatives, as it were, like Durkheim and social facts, or even the methodology of neoclassical economics. . . . Social life . . . is continually contingently reproduced by knowledgeable human agents—that's what gives its fixity and that's what also produces change. (Giddens & Pierson, 1998, p. 90)

Structuration theory allows for change through the duality of structure, as structure, both constraining and enabling,

> does not prevent the structured properties of social systems from stretching away, in time and space, beyond the control of any individual actors. Nor does it compromise the possibility that actors' own theories of the social systems which they help to constitute and reconstitute in their activities may reify those systems. (Giddens, 1984, p. 25)

Structuration is circumspect with regard to understanding change:

> In structuration theory, I argue that the possibility of change is there in every moment of social life, but a key part of social life is social reproduction. So change and consistency are somehow directly bound up with one another. If we ask wider questions about, say, why feudalism collapsed, one can't answer those on a logical level—we must look for more directly sociological, economic and

political interpretations of what happened. I don't claim to derive those from structuration theory as such. . . . For most of human history, the most striking thing is constancy rather than change. Only at a certain period, relatively recent in historical time, is there an injection of dynamism into history, that does seem to depend upon the relationships between time, space and power. (Giddens & Pierson, 1998, pp. 89-91)

Change, for structuration, is something that may happen, but the reasons for why there may be changes or what directions change may take seem outside its scope.

**Summary and Remarks**

Freud's civilization and Durkheim's social facts posit culture. For Freud, culture is something people build so as to protect themselves from each other. For Durkheim, culture not only *is*, but individuality is an illusion: culture is the cause of individual behavior, and individuality and free will are fiction. The cultural complex and cultural psychology posit the notion of culture and proceed to examine examples of how specific cultures affect specific behaviors or phenomena. The cultural complex endows individuals with rich meaning-making capabilities to the detriment of statistical significance. Cultural psychology offers statistical significance with discrete, linear theorizing to the detriment of rich meaning-making capabilities.

**Overview of Findings**

The question of cultural change is a mystery. For Durkheim's (1982) social facts, Freud's (2011) civilization, and social psychology, culture is respectively an amorphous, universal, or negated construct. For the cultural complex and cultural psychology, the causality between the cultural and the individual is unidirectional, from the former to the latter. The mechanisms by which culture may change remain underhypothesized.

Giddens's (1984) structuration theory opens the door to the co-constitution of individual and culture. However, little is known about culture, and the mechanisms through which culture changes remain unclear.

I am inclined to believe that this may be because, to my knowledge, there are no rich theoretical tools speaking to the evolution of culture (save, perhaps, for Karl Marx's historical materialism [Easton, 2004]). Object relations theory and self psychology offer rich tools related to change at the individual level. These tools, and their richness, however, have not been linked with the cultural level of analysis.

Complexity theory sheds some light on the links between the properties of a system's units and the properties of the system itself, notably the notion that system-level properties can emerge from the interactions of interdependent units (Waldrop, 1992, p. 82). I am proposing to use this insight to transport some of the richness of object relations theory and self psychology to the cultural realm.

**Chapter III**
**Findings and Clinical Applications**

**Introduction**

> *I need you, dear reader, to suitably nurture me if I am to reach my full humanity*
> *and creativity. And you need me as well, dear reader, to suitably nurture you if*
> *you are to reach your full humanity and creativity. The issue is that neither of us*
> *is instinctively programmed to suitably nurture each other.*

*Fabrice Paracuellos*

This is a stylized example of how I view—through the lens of post-Freudian

psychoanalytic theory—the core problem of human interaction. Around this core issue,

the framework I am attempting to build posits specific interactional mechanisms that

compose culture: the process of human aggregation, with relatedness at its core; the

influence of culture; and the paths culture can take.

The stylization of post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory I am offering casts

individuals on a potential teleological path of growth. Nurturation—the framework that I

am attempting to construct—seeks to provide an understanding of individuals and their

culture that embeds some, but not all, of this teleological potential. One of the benefits of

this approach is to provide some understanding about the nature and influence of culture,

an indication as to which cultural features are of special salience, as well as an

understanding of some of the mechanisms of cultural change. The price of such an

approach is to move partially away from cultural relativism. The impact of doing so is

mediated, I am hoping, by the ability to cast some clarity on the subject. I should also

note that according to this framework, looking down upon others is not a sign of maturity

on the part of the evaluator and, more importantly, is not conducive to others' growth. It is my deepest hope that this framework, or any framework, be used—albeit indirectly—to promote mutual respect. This is my normative bias.

Nurturation is a systemic framework. As such, it posits units with specific properties and looks at the properties that emerge from the interaction of those units (Waldrop, 1992, p. 82). Nurturation takes as units stylized human beings and theorizes about the phenomena that emerge from their interactional play. Consistent with the systemic nature of the framework, I present a stylized description of human beings individually, followed by the patterns of interaction between them that may arise from such a description.

**Post-Freudian Psychoanalytic Theory**

**Drives.** Post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory envisions humans as possessing a drive for connectedness with others and a desire for growth—growth in terms of mastery of self; understanding the physical environment; integration into the social world; and, ultimately, a desire for the growth of others (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983; Mitchell, 1988; Mitchell & Black, 1995; Wolf, 2002).

Actual growth is shaped by the nurturing one receives—that is, the forms of connectedness that one experiences. Different social environments (and to a certain, different extent, physical environments, though this is not the focus of this paper) promote or hamper different levels of growth (herein the words *growth*, *development*, *maturity*, *nurturing*, and *individuation* are used interchangeably). The patterns of connectedness one experiences early on have a certain degree of adhesiveness. They

determine the manner in which one will connect with others, particularly in the case of less nurturing environments (Mitchell & Black, 1995; Wallin, 2007).

**Levels of nurturing.** One's humanity gets expressed differently depending on the level of nurture one receives.

*Stress, slights, and difference.* Individuals who were less nurtured are more likely to be less tolerant of stress, slights, change, and difference. They are more prone to engage in, at best, social comparison and, at worst, jealousy and envy (Klein as cited in Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983, p. 128). We are all susceptible to these emotions, but what differentiates individuals who have received greater levels of nurturing in this framework is that they are less likely to be defined by these emotions; this is also the case for the other traits discussed below (McWilliams, 2011).

*Others as objects.* Nurturation assumes that individuals who received less nurturing are more narcissistic and tend to seek others as objects from which to derive their own satisfaction. It may be that others' satisfaction is required to derive one's own satisfaction from interacting with them, but others' satisfaction is not sought after for its own sake. Individuals who have received more nurturing still seek others as objects for their satisfaction, for they still seek connectedness, but others' satisfaction is also sought out for its own sake.

*Need for others and the boundaries of the self.* Lower levels of nurturing are also associated with a greater psychological need for others. (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983, p. 124). Authority is more salient and takes on the meaning associated with the type of connectedness established with those who reared the individual to his or her current level of growth. Individuals who have received greater levels of nurturing still seek others, for

connectedness is fundamental to human well-being, but they are more independent; the salience of authority recedes. The spectrum goes from "utter dependence" to "mature dependence" (Fairbairn as cited in Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983, p. 47). In parallel, the boundaries of the self are less clearly delineated for individuals who have experienced lower levels of nurturing, whereby the self incorporates more of the other members of the group. For those who have experienced higher levels of nurturing, the self is still embedded in the group but is endowed with greater autonomy (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983, pp. 159-160); this is relatively closer to the liberal ontology of individuals as benign autonomous units. This is a framework in which one's mode of connectedness is of central importance. Note the potential tension for those who have experienced lower levels of nurturing between the inclination to use others as objects and the need for others.

**Conditions for growth.** The path to growth lies in providing individuals with a holding environment in which they are appreciated and enjoyed for who they are, regardless of their moods. This is a state of "subjective omnipotence," a state in which caregivers allow developing individuals their "moment of illusion" (Winnicott as cited in Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 126). The task of the caregiver is to first provide subjective omnipotence and then let "objective reality" seep through progressively by "failing" individuals slowly and incrementally as they mature, allowing them to develop mastery (Winnicott as cited in Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 126). This is nurturing. All this requires empathic and present caregivers, caregivers who do not use the individual as a unilateral object—that is to say, caregivers who are nurturing individuals (and who therefore have been nurtured themselves). This also requires an external environment safe enough for

survival and exploration. I suspect this to be a never-ending process, although the level of

empathy required decreases as the individual matures, with different beings taking,

intentionally or not, the role of caregiver as the individual evolves.

**Culture**

This framework posits that we are all born with a lower level of development and

that growth occurs only if we are nurtured by individuals who, unlike us, have already

been nurtured. We must therefore examine how individuals who have received lower

levels of nurturing are to live together. This is a dilemma. The level of nurturing they

have received is such that they are endowed with a certain level of narcissism, while at

the same time needing the approval of others. Growing out of it is not a readily available

option since no one has been nurtured enough to provide what others need to develop. If

narcissism prevails, conflict is likely to ensue. If connectedness and authority prevail, and

conflict subsides, some form of stability may occur.

**Social system.** Given that lower levels of nurturing are associated with less

tolerance for change and a greater sensitivity to authority, I posit that individuals will be

more inclined to adhere to a social system in which each individual has a specific,

predefined role; the lower levels of tolerance to change applies of course to change that

does not flatter one's narcissism, need for connectedness, or material well-being. Co-

constituting that stability is the notion that individuals are more likely to receive the

connectedness they need, and to approve of each other, if they follow socially prescribed

roles. The roles themselves include connectedness scripts—that is, how an individual

from one role relates to others. These include scripts such as parenting scripts or political

scripts. Roles can be conceived as subgroups within a group, and this subgrouping can be recursive (i.e., a group can be made of subgroups that are each made of subgroups).

Because of their greater level of discomfort with change, the stickiness of the modes of connectedness, and their systemic character, these social systems are likely to be endowed with greater stability in the social roles and scripts they define. This is culture. This is not to say that the greater stability is exempt from tensions. But if instability occurs, new individuals may change social roles, but the roles themselves— and the patterns of connectedness they embed—are less likely to change.

Social groups in early periods of human history were likely small due to population density. Under initial demographic pressure and out-group pressure—the need to protect from the threat, real or imagined, of the Other—those groups expanded in size. Spectacular evidence of this phenomenon has been witnessed with the emergence of nationalism (Searle-White, 2001). In the process, other groups may have become absorbed or extinct.

Different cultures will have, due to different accidental, environmental, or historical circumstances, different sets of values or ideology (ranging, for instance, from the color that brides should wear to the specifics of the metaphysics of afterlife). But what this framework emphasizes is that part of a culture is related to the level of psychological growth it allows its (co-)constituents to reach. Those characteristics are the core of how group members treat each other. They constitute the group members and are therefore least likely to change. They determine the nature of change that a culture may undergo. And they are also at the core of how a group may treat out-groups.

**Out-grouping.** Because the boundaries of the self of individuals who have received less nurturing are less well delineated, they are more inclined to encompass and identify with fellow individuals within their group—the group they co-constitute. Such individuals are therefore more likely to be part of their group. They are also more likely to view members of out-groups as out-groups themselves, negating the possibility for individual differences in the out-grouped Other. Since lower levels of nurturing are associated with greater sensitivity to slights, less tolerance for change, and greater tendency for social comparison and jealousy, individuals who have received lower levels of nurturing are more likely to have hostile views toward out-groups.

**Change**

Nurturation posits two different stylized types of cultural change. The first one is change that is not significantly relevant to connectedness and to the level of growth that individuals are allowed to reach. This can be a change in clothing color or, as mentioned above, changes in the attribution of predefined roles. Although nurturation allows this type of change, it has little to say about it since this framework focuses primarily on the aspects of relations between individuals that impact their growth. The second kind of change is that which is related to the maturity of individuals. Of interest are changes to the social roles themselves and the kinds of connectedness the roles embed. Given the inclination to avoid change in societies with lower levels of nurturing, how can growth occur?

Although nurturation endows societies co-constituted by individuals who have received lower levels of nurturing with greater stability, it does not necessarily mandate absolute stability, particularly in the case of systems that are more open by virtue of

circumstances. This opening coupled with the fundamental need for growth, even when growth is stunted, makes developmental change a possibility—perhaps more so if a group's underlying ideology includes values that can be formulated in a direction consistent with development. That possibility is of course more tenuous with lower levels of nurturing. Conversely, change may accelerate with greater levels of nurturing.

It should be noted that in this framework, the role of ideology tends to be secondary. The role of ideology becomes more of a post hoc explanation of the kinds of instantiated, or about-to-be instantiated, connectedness that is important to nurturation. I suspect that some changes in connectedness initiated at the ideological level may be those that reflect actual patterns of connectedness in the group but are directed at other groups, for example, the members of some groups that have more nurturing patterns may extend their nurturing to members of minority groups they have not been treated well historically.

Development can also be initiated externally (an illustration of the deeply systematic character of nurturation). External ideas, their embedded modes of connectedness, and the identity of their authors can resonate with a society in a way that allows change. Negative growth—regression—is a possibility. Such development can occur intrinsically. If a culture develops superficially, if mastery increases, change becomes less frightening and the culture can start engaging in new experiments. The issue arises if members, freed from their self-imposed restraints, start engaging in experiments that flatter their narcissism. Conflict arises and the fabric of the society may be impacted or, alternatively, out-groups (real or created) may become victimized. In both cases, the trauma that ensues may negatively impact the growth of individuals.

This mechanism makes the task of normatively comparing cultures difficult (for which I am thankful). From a humanistic perspective, mature levels of development are to be preferred, for they potentially embed a greater respectful encounter of the other, and of the self. But the process of growth, as illustrated by the internal European catastrophes from the Thirty Years' War to World War II and externally by the colonial disasters (Kissinger, 1994; Todorov, 1984), can be quite costly.

Although not the focus of the paper, a word should be said about the environment. If the constraints it imposes are overwhelming (e.g., if survival is a constant concern), the weight of "objective reality" will be such that the possibility for development will be hampered (Winnicott as cited in Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 126). Culture has a fractal quality insofar as it can occur at different subgroup levels. The issue of complexity is particularly salient when different out-groups, groups, and subgroups interact.

**Jungian Psychology**

Nurturation uses as its starting point post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory, partly because the richness of the interdependence it allows is compatible with a complexity theory framework with its underlying notion of examining the properties that emerge from interacting units. It does not commence with Jungian psychology, for the Jungian emphasis is primarily directed inward, toward the second half of life, and the richness and exploration of the interior world. Nonetheless, links can be established between nurturation and Jungian psychology.

Jungian psychology proposes a collective unconscious and a personal unconscious. A cultural unconscious has also been posited and examined (Singer & Kimbles, 2004). Nurturation looks at the mechanism by which the cultural unconscious

emerges and may evolve, as well as its influence. If the collective unconscious embeds the total set of human possibilities (the human potential) and the personal unconscious embeds the actual level of growth of an individual, the cultural unconscious is the field through which individuation is instantiated. It can be conceived as a bridge between potentialities (collective unconscious) and the actualization of a certain level of growth in a specific individual (personal unconscious). It sets some constraints on the level of individuation an individual may achieve. Different cultures place different levels of constraints on how far their individuals may grow, as different parents do to their offspring. Culture then is, in a way, a parent.

**Empirical Considerations**

This paper is informed by felt experiences associated with being abroad (although I am no longer sure what constitutes abroad), by some notions of what it means to be human, and by fragments of historical knowledge. It is empirically light. I nonetheless attempt to formulate a few ideas with regard to empirical considerations and nurturation.

**Epistemology.** Ontologically, as can be seen throughout this paper, I am inclined to believe that there is some kind of reality. Having postpositivist affinities, I do not believe that reality can ever be known. I do maintain the hope, however, that reality may be able to be better approached epistemologically by rejecting ideas that are amenable to falsification when they are falsified. (I also observe that I seem to value the discovery of reality, if there is indeed such a thing—a proposition not completely incompatible with nurturation.) Can nurturation be falsified? I believe that it can.

**Change.** Nurturation infers that patterns of connectedness are stable, particularly in societies at lower levels of nurturing. It therefore asserts that communities whose

members do not treat each other well are unlikely to dramatically switch to treating each other well sui generis. Finding such instances would weaken nurturation's claims (however, not finding such instances would not, as postpositivists might believe, demonstrate the validity of nurturation).

One way to operationalize whether members of a society treat each other well is to quantify the murder rates within societies. Underlying this reasoning is the position that the act of members of society killing each other is antithetical to the victims' growth and nurturing, to say the least. Homicide rates, which do not include legal killings, for Europe show gradual, not dramatic, improvement (Eisner, 2003). Figure 1, which plots data documented by Manuel Eisner (2003), a criminologist, shows this gradual improvement.. It should be noted that mass killings such as those imposed by the Nazi state on its own people, because they were legal, are not included in homicide rates. Such horrors are theorized as being the result of the partial development of a culture that believes it has acquired more mastery than it actually has. Nurturation anticipates that a more precise measurement of the level of societal development than that provided by the murder rate within a society, if available, would show some, though partial, development (perhaps as a teenager shows partial development in relation to a younger child). Nurturation posits the proportion of secure attachment style as a more precise measurement (see below). Unfortunately, data for Nazi Germany are unavailable to the best of my knowledge. Additional data from other parts of the globe would be of great value in confirming or contradicting the proposal that improvements are going to be small, especially in societies with lower levels of nurturing. Attention should be paid to

the issue of determining the extent to which a societal change is sui generis, presumably a more complex proposition in a more globalized world.
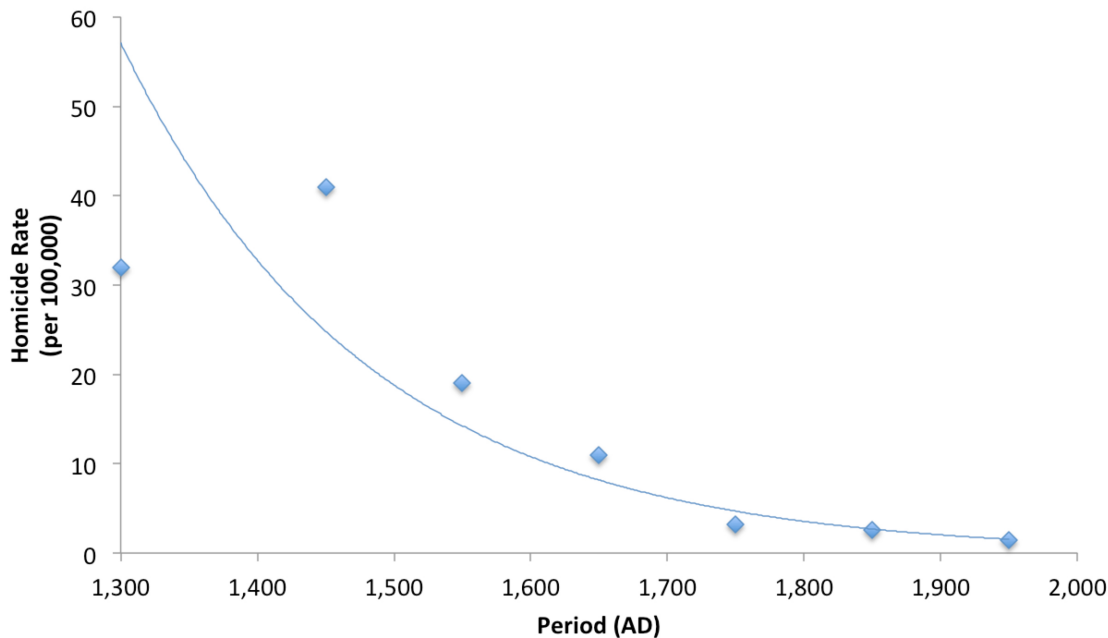


*Figure 1. Overall homicide rates in Europe.* Author.

***Cultures.*** Another way to operationalize how well members of a society treat each other may be to examine the distribution attachment style in the society. This is presumably a more precise measurement than that provided by homicide rates. Attachment theory examines the patterns of connectedness in primary relationships. It distinguishes two broad styles of attachment: secure and insecure (the insecure attachment style is itself broken up in two insecure attachment substyles: avoidant-dismissing and ambivalent-preoccupied). A third style of attachment is also theorized: disorganized-unresolved.

Securely attached parents tend "to reflect sensitivity rather than misattunement, acceptance rather than rejection, cooperation rather than control, and emotional availability rather than remoteness" (Wallin, 2007, p. 19). In contrast, insecurely attached parents in the dismissing category actively rebuff their children's bid for connection, withdraw when their infants appear to be sad, and in general display "inhibition of emotional expression [and] aversion to physical contact" (Wallin, 2007, p. 20). Insecurely attached parents in the preoccupied category are "at best, unpredictably and occasionally available" to their children (Wallin, 2007, p. 20). Although these parents are "neither verbally nor physically rejecting (as the mothers of avoiding infants [are]), their responsiveness to their infants' signal [is] just as insensitive" (Wallin, 2007, p. 20). These parents seem "subtly, or not so subtly, to discourage their [children's] autonomy" (Wallin, 2007, p. 20). Last, disorganized parents display frightening anger or abuse toward their children, are themselves frightened, or tend to dissociate (Wallin, 2007, p. 23).

Higher levels of nurturing could therefore be operationalized as greater proportions of secure attachment styles in a population. Lower levels may be operationalized as greater proportions of disorganized-unresolved attachment styles, whereas intermediate levels could be characterized by a predominance of insecure attachment styles. This framework would tend to predict that a change in the distribution of attachment style toward secure attachment is likely to be slow, especially at lower levels of nurturing—and that at lower levels of nurturing a greater uniformity of attachment style is likely to prevail. Unfortunately, such data are unlikely to be available

for durations long enough to be of significance given that attachment theory emerged in the second half of the 20th century.

Although longitudinal data are not likely available, cross-sectional data are theoretically accessible. Meta studies have been conducted comparing the distribution of attachment styles across countries or groups: African Americans, Central Americans, Chileans, Chinese, Columbians, Dominicans, Euro-Americans, French Canadians, Germans, Indonesians, Israelis, Japanese, Malians, Norwegians, Portuguese, Puerto Ricans, and South Africans (McKenna, 2009). Different studies tend to anecdotally point to differences across groups, indicating that there are different cultures (*culture* in the sense that nurturation implies: patterns of relatedness that promote specific levels of individuation). It is not clear, however, whether the samples examined and the variety of methodologies employed in the different studies render the differences statistically significant. Further studies would be required. On a personal note, I am deeply uncomfortable with the notion of comparing cultures.

***Social norms and authority.*** Nurturation posits that in groups that have received lower levels of nurturing, social roles are more likely to prevail and authority is likely to be more salient. Nurturation would therefore posit that class structure and authority-oriented forms of governance are likely to be more prevalent in groups that have received lower levels of nurturing. Finding historical data quantifying class structure and authority prevalence (and inversely human rights), juxtaposing that data to the evolution of levels of nurturing, and examining whether those are correlated would shed some light on the relevance of nurturation. Finding levels of nurturing not positively correlated to class structure prevalence and authority prevalence would invalidate nurturation.

**Individuals.** Nurturation posits that for individuals to reach some maturity, mature individuals must nurture them. Operationalizing the level of maturity as attachment style (see above), nurturation predicts that the attachment style of caregiving individuals is likely to propagate to the caregivees. Research on attachment theory indicates that a child's attachment style can be predicted as mirroring the parent's attachment style with about 75% accuracy, before the child is born (Wallin, 2007, p. 32). If attachment style is taken as a measure of maturity, such findings would seem compatible with nurturation's proposition that to reach maturity one must have received the proper nurture.

Nurturation also posits that the level of nurturing an individual receives varies negatively with the individual's sensitivity to stress, slights, differences, use of others as objects, and merger with the group, and varies positively with mastery of self, understanding of the environment, integration into the social world, and ultimately a desire for the growth of others. Finding data about those traits would shed some light on the validity or nonvalidity of nurturation. Attachment theory partially confirms those positions of nurturation:

> Children with a history of secure attachment show substantially greater self-esteem, emotional health and ego resilience, positive affect, initiative, social competence, and concentration in play than do their insecure peers. . . . As for later development, secure attachment seems to confer a measure of resilience on those so favored in life. (Wallin, 2007, p. 23)

"Insecure models of attachment, in contrast, tend to be more rigid and so less open" (Wallin, 2007, p. 27).

The research on the transmission of development potential in attachment theory focuses on the propagation of development potential from parent to child. Although nurturation is interested in this mode of propagation, nurturation is also interested in the

influence that peers, and more generally nonparents, have on individuals' development. Social psychology hints that peers influence behavior (Asch, 1955; Milgram, 1963). What would be of interest is research further examining the types of influences that nonparents play, particularly with regard to psychological development.

**Complexity.** It is important to touch upon complexity related to international relations and, more generally, intergroup relations. As it is currently formulated, nurturation recognizes that groups may impact each other's individuation but the manner in which this is done is currently poorly theorized, save for the notion that a group may negatively impact another group's level of nurturing through inflicting trauma. Consequently, refining nurturation in that area may lead to empirical predictions more relevant within a more globalized world. Additional complexity also stems from relationships between nurturing and the environment. These domains, also, would merit further theorizing as part of nurturation.

**Clinical Applications**

Nurturation posits that humans are interconnected; that this interconnectedness has a permeating fieldlike quality; and that this field, which nurturation labels "culture," affects humans' individuation. Understanding culture is therefore a type of understanding of self. It is also an understanding of self in its actual potentialities, however fuzzy those might be. Much has been written, independent of nurturation, with regard to culture and its relationship to the individual. One application of nurturation consists of posing the question of what fieldlike qualities in our human environment may promote and limit our individuation. I do not know the extent to which we can have sufficient awareness to conduct such self-other observation. I also do not know the extent to which successfully

conducting such observations might be helpful. What I do believe is that part of our purpose as clinicians and as human beings is to exercise our awareness.

Another application of nurturation is gaining a better sense of our vulnerability as beings permeated by our environment, and of the potential for mutual nurturing that our human condition potentially allows. One of our goals as clinicians is to help our clients individuate. One of our responsibilities as clinicians, in light of nurturation's findings, may be to help those clients whose growth is hindered by culture to gain such an awareness, and explore (or perhaps even form?) communities whose values may be more conducive to the clients' development. Care should be taken to not assess our clients' culture for them. This is a task that clients are better equipped to perform than we are. Joining, or forming, more nurturing communities might also be of value for clinicians themselves.

**Conclusion**

Nurturation conceives of individuals and their level of individuation or maturity as being dependent on others. Culture, then, is the field of individuation potential that arises from putting individuals together. Nurturation posits that because the field is experiential (the experience of how one is treated by others), because of the recursivity of the interdependence between people (how I treat you affects how you treat me, which affects how I treat you), and because (particularly at lower levels of nurturing) change is to be avoided, culture, and its individuation potential, is endowed with stability, particularly at lower levels of development and in closed societies.

Additionally, because social systems involve large numbers of people (the previous example of how you I treat you affects how you treat me only considered a two-

person, implicitly closed system), because social systems are likely to interact with other social systems, and because humans are also part of an environmental system, the mechanisms at play and the issue of change are complex propositions. At the same time, because nurturation posits individuals as having a drive for growth, even when stunted this drive endows culture with the possibility of evolving over time toward greater individuation potential.

By granting more importance to the early years in one's existence, nurturation implicitly views the way children are treated as of essential importance. I am encouraged by the emergence of the world *child* (see Figure 2).
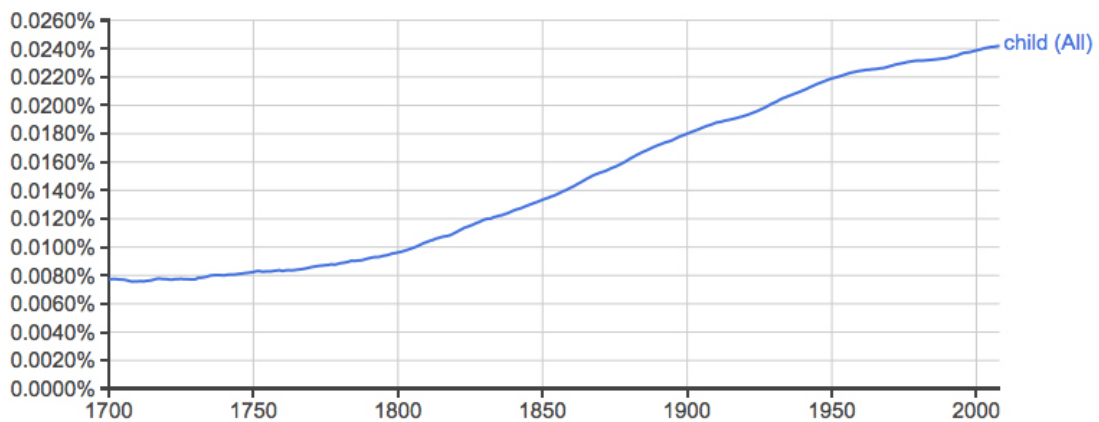


*Figure 2. Use of the word "child" from 1700 to 2008.* From *Google Books Ngram Viewer*. Retrieved from https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=child&case_insensitive=on&year_start=1700&year_end=2008&corpus=15&smoothing=50&share=&direct. Public domain.

It is my hope that as a species, we, humans, will individuate. Through this discussion, one of the questions I was trying to answer was this: Can there be goodness (that which is implied by nurturation)? I hope that the affirmative response that nurturation timidly provides is true.

**Chapter IV**
**Summary and Conclusions**

**Summary**

Nurturation posits that culture is the field that we, as interdependent entities, co-create, by virtue of being interdependent. The manner in which this human field primarily operates is through the patterns of connectedness that are expressed. The field affects our individuation potential and its constitution is such that it tends to perpetuate this potential, particularly at lower levels of development.

Individuals born in a specific field are influenced by it. Constraints and help are placed before them with regard to their ability to reach their human potential. Conscious cognition is of less importance in nurturation. What takes the center stage is the way individuals treat each other, which is recursively a product of how they have been treated. At the same time, the constraints are not all powerful so there is room for growth, albeit less so in societies with lower levels of maturity.

We, humans, have a drive for wanting to grow and to connect to others to achieve that growth. In that light, a child who says, "Watch me" to a loved one is profoundly insightful. The actual growth we experience depends on how nurtured we are. Yet, regardless of whether our development is stunted or not, nurturation posits that we do have a drive to grow. It is my hope that despite the stability in a given level of individuation potential embedded within a culture, that drive for growth will get its aim expressed.

Although the historically slow pace of cultural change may be deplored, there is hope that as more maturity is reached, more positive changes along the values espoused by humanism may eventually be experienced. Hope is tenuous, because the process of cultural development can be horrific (as demonstrated by the post-Enlightenment European-initiated conflicts) and because no matter how nurturing a culture is, it is (as long as there exists more than one culture) part of an international system that may not be devoid of threats. Nonetheless, hope is there.

**Conclusions**

**Clinical implications.** Nurturation raises our awareness on the hindrance (and help) that our everyday environment, our culture, may place on our individuation. This becomes a relevant clinical concern when a client's culture places hurdles on her or his development (an assessment that only clients can ultimately make). One implication may be to help those clients locate more form nurturing communities; or it may be to help clients who are sufficiently ready to gain a greater respect for the vulnerability that is inherent in their humanity.

**Areas for further research.** From an empirical perspective, attachment theory, and the epistemology associated with it, appears to hold promise with regard to being able to empirically validate nurturation partly, fully, or not at all. I would like to see more attachment theory data collected to that effect. From a theoretical perspective, I have been using attachment theory empirical findings as an empirical bridge to a theoretical construction that was built on object relations theory and self psychology (nurturation). I would be interested in knowing what nurturation would look like if attachment theory was used as its theoretical core instead.

**Reflections.** I suspect that placing together any interdependent entities leads to the emergence of what may look like a semiautonomous force impacting those entities. At times, I find it difficult to comprehend this concept (not to mention the additional notion that in some systems this semiautonomous force can change the instantiated properties of the entities themselves). At a cognitive analytical level, the notion of recursivity and circular causality that this concept underlies are concepts that still feel unfamiliar. At a cognitive intuitive level, I perceive a certain naturalness to the notion that the units of a system seem to generate forces that do not belong to any particular unit of the system. At an emotional level, I find both some beauty in and some resistance to this concept, as I understand it in its application to myself as a human, social being, recipient, and partial producer of individuation-impacting culture.

**Resistance.** The resistance stems from a realization that my interdependence also implies vulnerability. According to nurturation, as I am permeated by an individuation impacting field, I am not *the* master of my growth. The society I live in impacts my growth. And other societies that impact the society I live in may impact my growth. From that perspective, the coming online in the international system of a new leading power holding a different view of the notion of human rights internally than that espoused by the previous leading power ("La Chine Devient la Première Puissance," 2014) has me aware of the potential for changes to come in the distribution of culture and individuation potential in the international system.

**Beauty.** The beauty stems from the potential for the spreading of mutual individuation that nurturation allows. The potential for goodness is innate in all of us. The ease with which this potential can be expressed is a product of the time in which one is

born. The beauty also stems from my perception that the people in my spaces and time

(North America, circa 2015) do not have to fear being burned as witches or being

questioned by the Holy Inquisition. It stems from an appreciation of the suffering that has

been endured to be able to reach this point. It also stems from an appreciation of a level

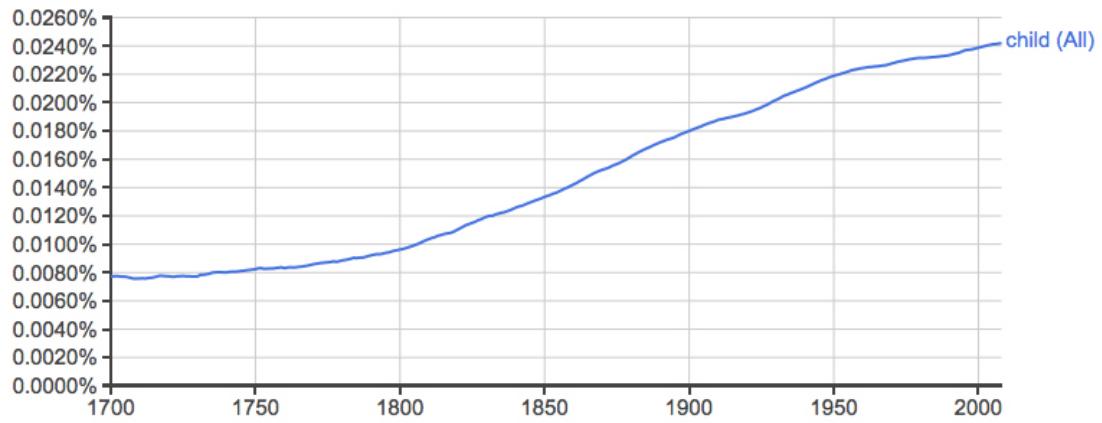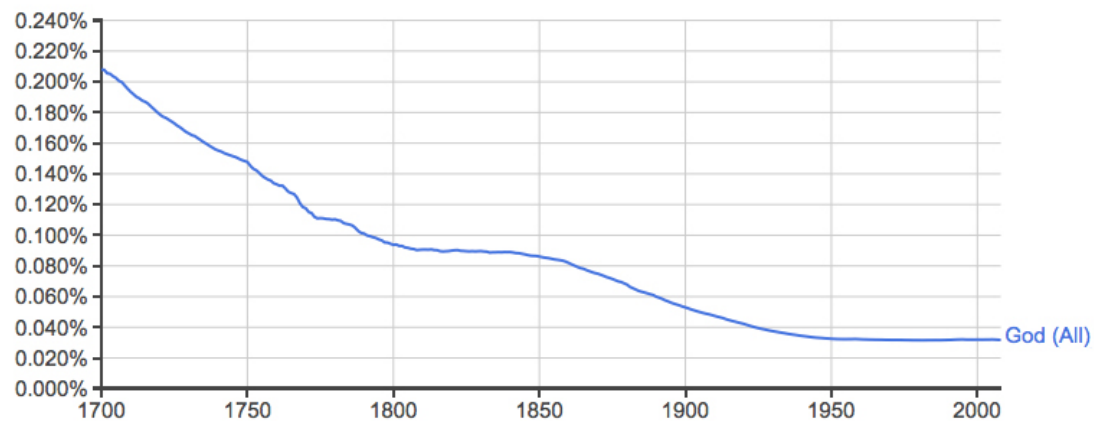of maturity greater than ours that our descendants may enjoy.





*Figure 3. Use of the words "God" & "child" from 1700 to 2008.* From *Google Books Ngram Viewer*. Retrieved from
https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=God&case_insensitive=on&year_start=1700&year_end=2008&corpus=15&smoothing=50&share=&direct. Public domain.

Part of the core of nurturation is the way children are treated. Earlier I wrote of the emergence of the world *child,* at least in English (and displayed a graph to that effect—see bottom half of Figure 3). Coinciding with this emergence is the decline, albeit in greater proportion, of the use of the word *God* (see Figure 3). Perhaps this is the emergence of a gradual awareness of the possibility that the sacred is within. The awareness of the potential for self-other goodness, in light of our vulnerability and the realization that its opposite can be, and has been, instantiated—these, are, perhaps, one aspect of the sacred.

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