The background is a solid green color with a pattern of various leaf shapes in a slightly darker shade of green, scattered across the surface. The leaves vary in size and orientation, some pointing upwards and others downwards.

Building the Nest: From brain function to flourishing children and communities of character

Darcia Narvaez

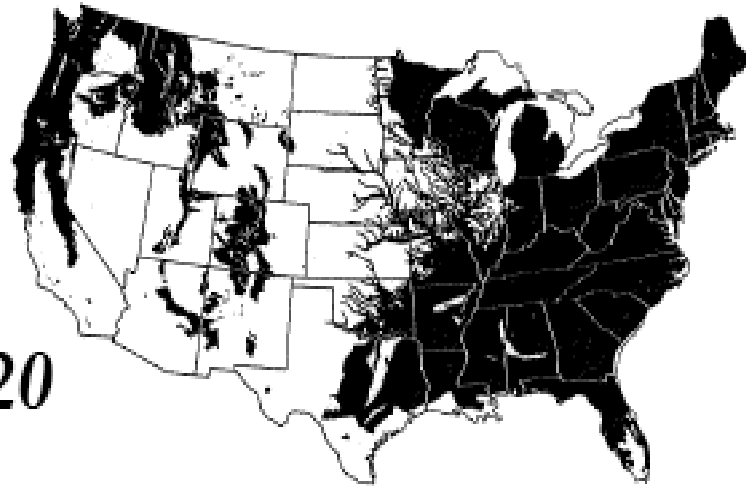
University of Notre Dame

We are in a big mess!

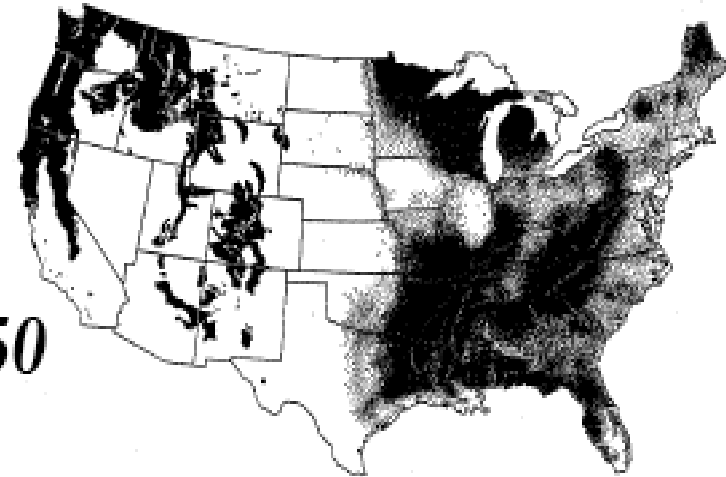
- Human wellbeing in USA on the decline
 - Mental illness increasing (in real numbers) (USDHHS)
 - Violence and suicide at high rates
 - US folks under age 50 at a health disadvantage compared to 16 other nations (NRC, 2013)
 - US lifespan has shrunk
 - Child wellbeing ranks near bottom of advanced nations
- Earth systems are breaking down
 - Climate instability; melting of ice caps (IPCC)
 - Massive ecological disruption from human activity virtually everywhere (UNMEA)
 - “Biological annihilation” (PNAS, 2017)

Shifting Baselines

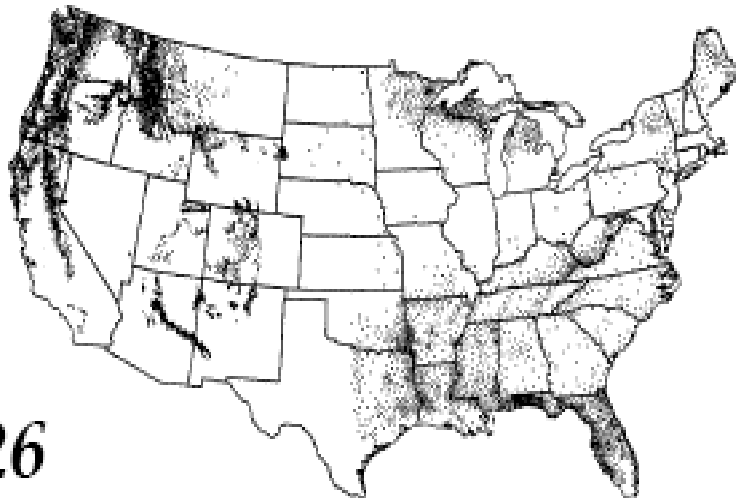
Old-Growth National Forests



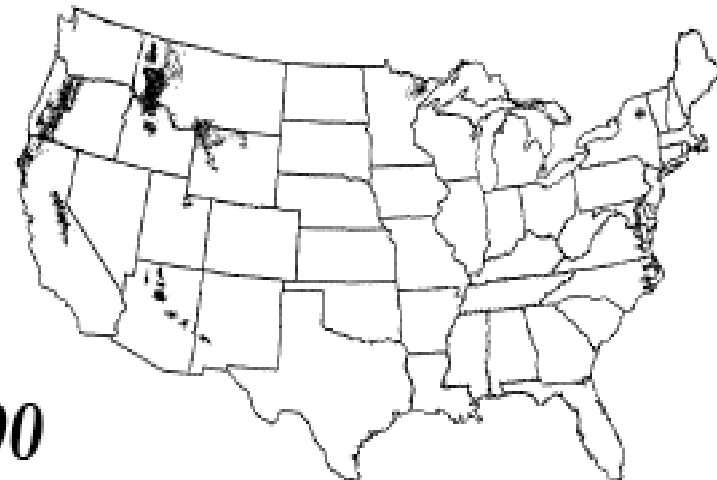
1620



1850

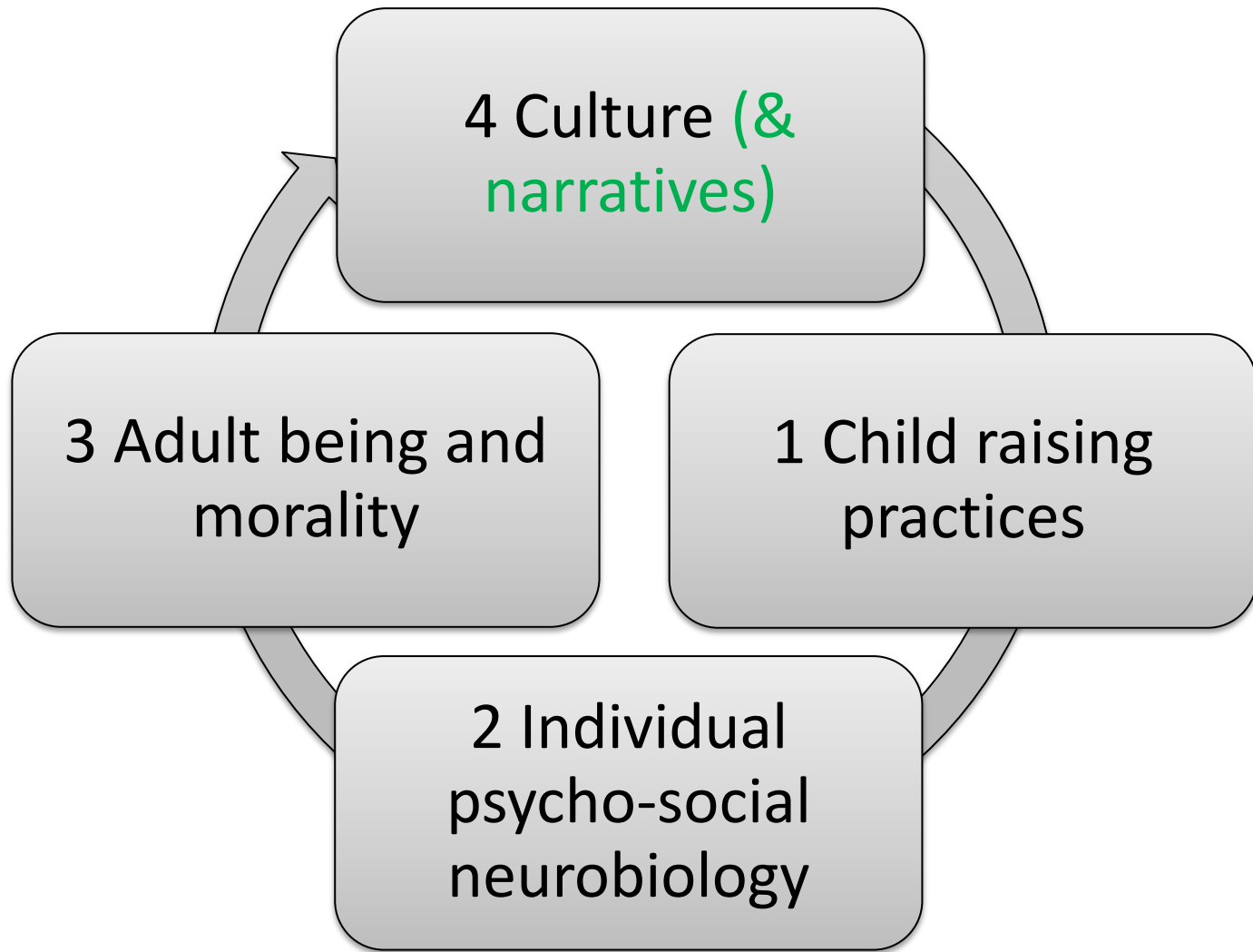


1926



1990

Shifting baselines for human ecosystem too



Where do we start?

Establish baselines

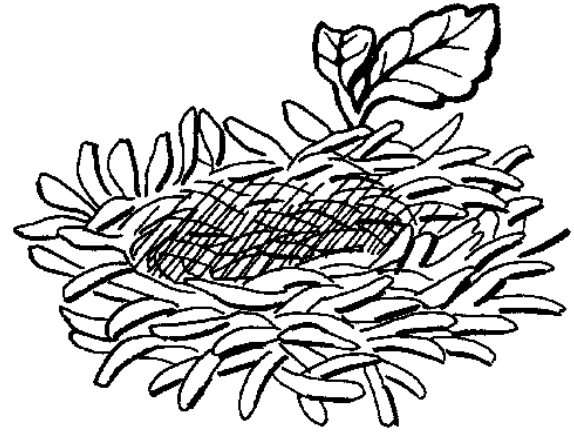
What do children need for optimal development?

- **Animal** needs for warmth and nourishment
-

- **Mammalian** needs for affection and play
- **Social mammalian** needs for extensive bonding, and community support
- **Human** needs for
 - Intersubjectivity with multiple adults
 - Immersion in communal rituals
 - Apprenticeship in adult activities
 - **Guiding narratives**

Narvaez, 2014

Ethology, Anthropology, Psychology



**LIKE ALL ANIMALS,
HUMANS HAVE A NEST**

Lifetime Evolved Nest

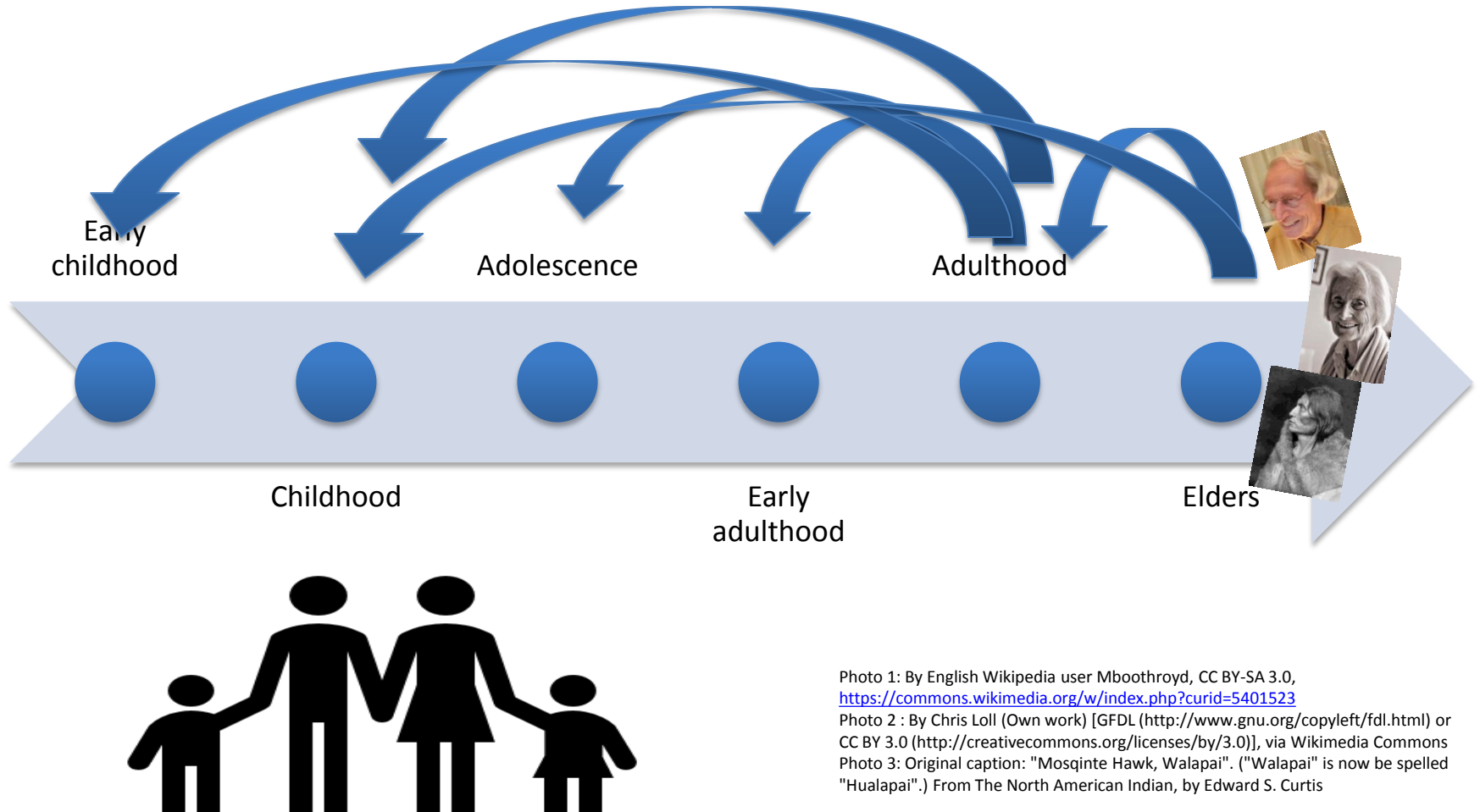
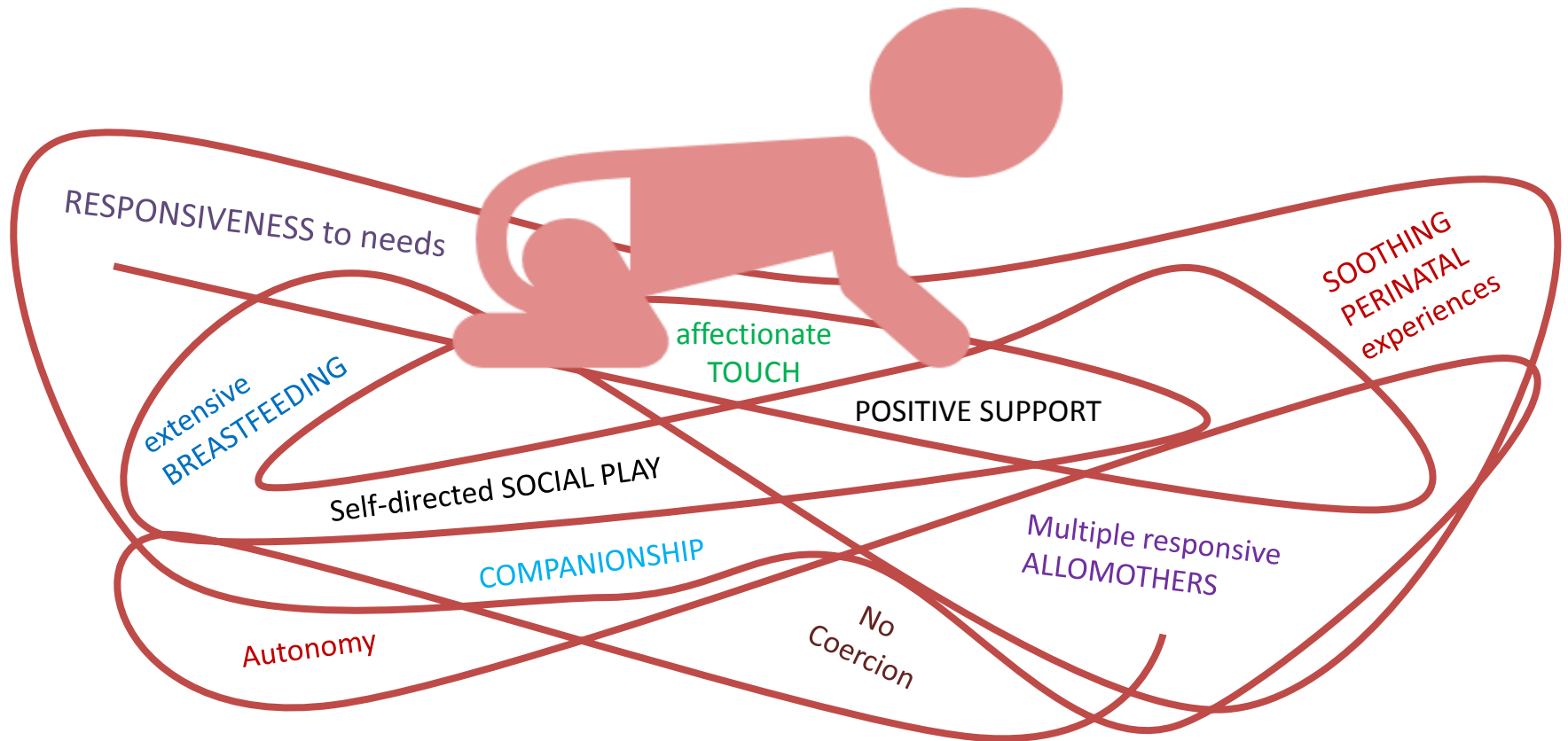


Photo 1: By English Wikipedia user Mboothroyd, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5401523>

Photo 2 : By Chris Loll (Own work) [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>) or CC BY 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Photo 3: Original caption: "Mosqinte Hawk, Walapai". ("Walapai" is now be spelled "Hualapai".) From The North American Indian, by Edward S. Curtis

The place where stories begin



The ***Evolved Nest*** for Young Children

Early body-brain-mind development



- Human babies are highly immature at birth
 - need “**extergestation**” (Montagu, 1978)
- **Constant interaction** between “nature” and “nurture”
 - **Epigenetic** effects of early experience for all systems
 - Developmentally plastic **dynamic** system
- Biosocial construction of
 - Emotions and cognition **TOGETHER** (intertwined)
 - **Implicit self** (social and moral) (*Schore; Stern; Trevarthen*)
 - **Social worldview** (*Tomkins*)

Human Evolved Developmental Niche

Provisioned by a community

Konner (2005): Hunter Gatherer Childhood Model: Recurring Patterns
(Most practices are 30-40 million years old)

- **SOOTHING PERINATAL EXPERIENCES**
- **TOUCH:** *Held or kept near others constantly*
- **RESPONSIVITY:** *Prompt responses to fusses and cries*
- **BREASTFEEDING:** *Nursed frequently (2-3 times/hr initially) for 2-5 years*
- **ALLOPARENTS:** *Frequently cared for by individuals other than mothers (fathers and grandmothers, in particular)*
- **PLAY:** *Enjoy free play in natural world with multiage playmates*
- **SOCIAL SUPPORT:** *High social embeddedness*

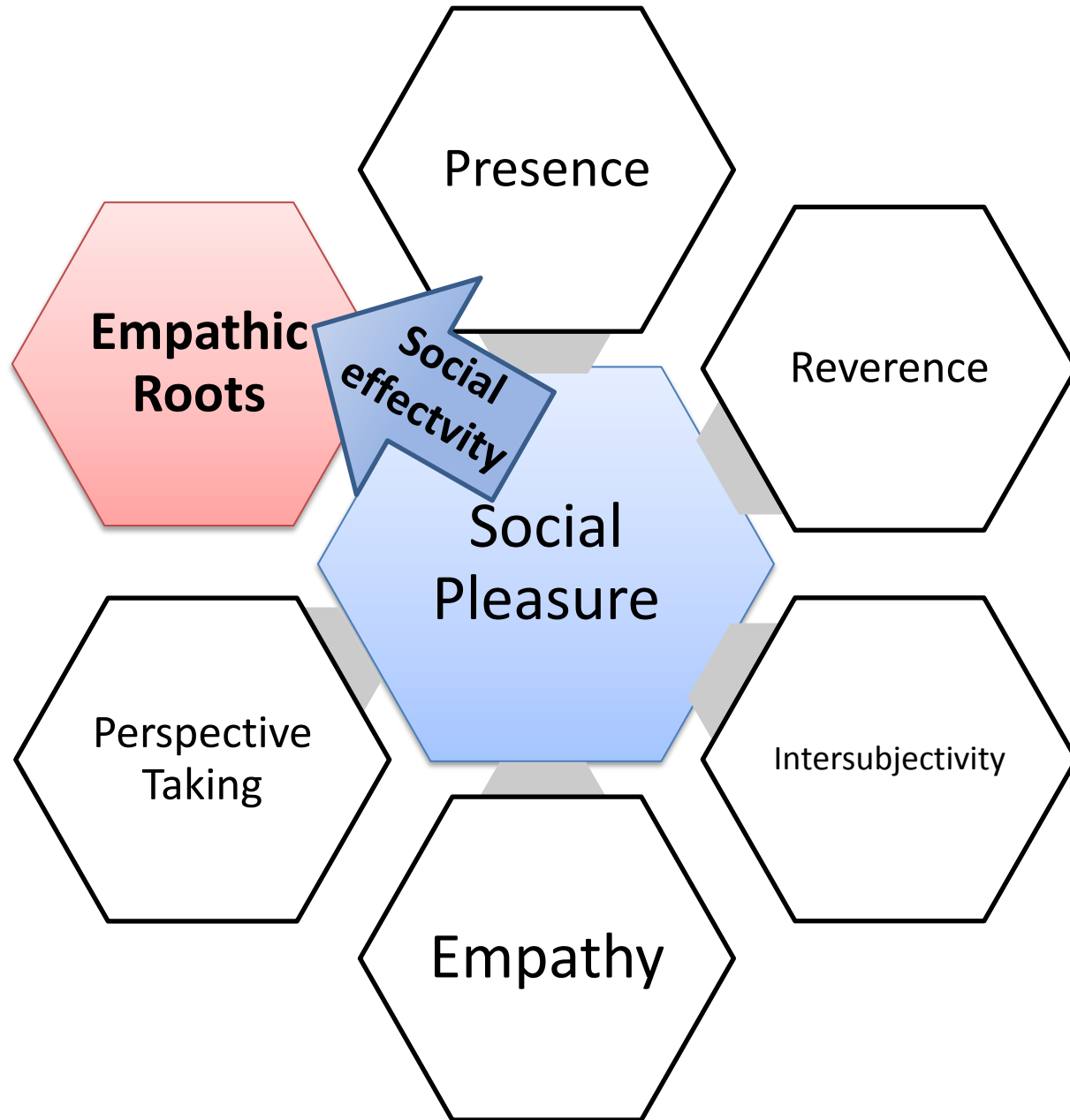
All are related to self-regulation



“The feeling appropriate to an infant in arms is his feeling of rightness, or essential goodness ... the premise that he is right, good, and welcome.

Without that conviction, a human being of any age is crippled by a lack of confidence, a full sense of self, of spontaneity, of grace.” (Liedloff, *The Continuum Concept*, p. 34)

What babies practice, they become



Child's Neurobiological Story



Brain system function with good care

(based on MacLean, 1990; triune brain theory)

Survival systems

ANGER, FEAR, PANIC/GRIEF,
LUST, SEEKING
(fight, flight, freeze, faint)

Control

Human Executive functions and neocortex:

Grown postnatally

abstraction and
imagination
*interact with other
systems*

Mammalian

Grown postnatally

Sociality:

CARE, PLAY

Heart-
centered
imagination

Species-Typical Mindsets

ENGAGEMENT ETHIC

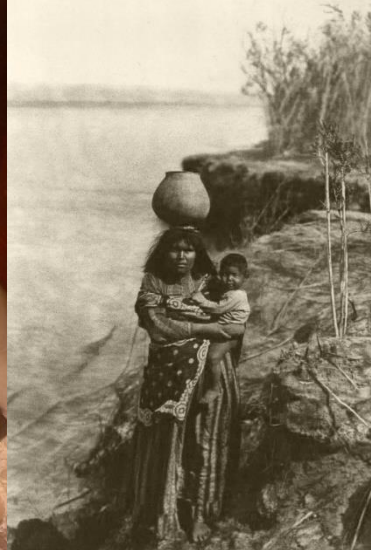
- Full presence in the moment
 - Intersubjectivity
 - Resonance with the Other
 - Egalitarian regard
 - I-Thou
- Developed and primed by supportive, caring relationships and environments
 - Secure attachment (Bowlby)
 - Companionship care (Trevvarthen)

COMMUNAL IMAGINATION

- Egalitarian respect
- Resonant responsibility
- Sympathetic action
- Agency and communion flow together



Narvaez, 2013; Based on review of small-band hunter gatherer descriptions (e.g., work by Tim Ingold; Richard Lee; James Woodburn; Douglas Fry; and indigenous literatures)



What happens
when you move
from early care like
this....

Black and White: Edward Sheriff Curtis (1868–1952) was an American photographer and writer. His works are held by the U.S. [Library of Congress](#); these are all now part of the [public domain](#), since their copyright was never renewed. Older paintings by Emile Manier, public domain; newer style paintings by Mary Cassatt, public domain. *The Virgin and Child under an Apple* by Lucas Cranach the Elder, public domain

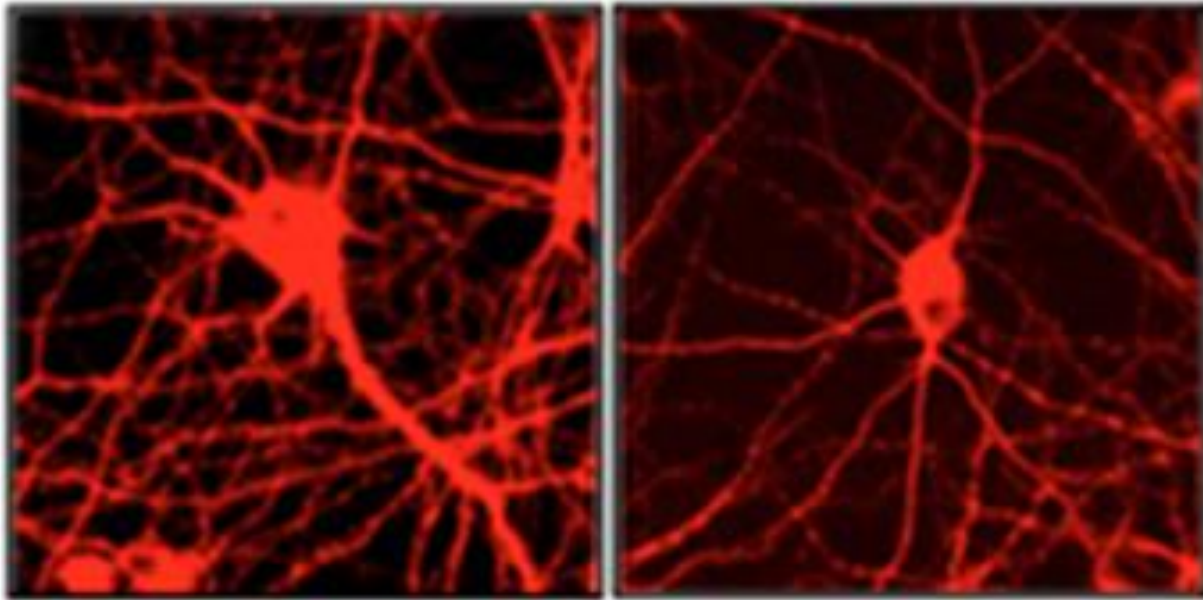


To early care like this?



Clockwise from top left: Berthe Moriset, *The Cradle*, 1872; Monet in his cradle, 1867; Lorenz Frølich, *Child in a crib*—all public domain. 4: Taken by [Bardflies](#). A participant in [Wikipedia Takes Waroona](#), [photo scavenger hunt](#). Participants in these events have agreed to have their photos uploaded under free licenses by the event organizers. 5: Marabou child sitting in a stroller. Author: [Rainmaker7469](#); This file is made available under the [Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication](#).

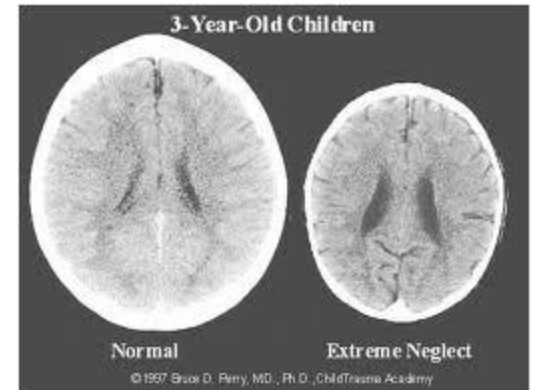
What happens to a baby **physiologically** when basic needs are ignored?



Kang HJ, Voleti B, Hajszan T, Rajkowska G, Stockmeier CA, Licznarski P, Lepack A, Majik MS, Jeong LS, Banasr M, Son H, Duman RS (August 2012). Decreased expression of synapse-related genes and loss of synapses in major depressive disorder. *Nature Medicine* 18.

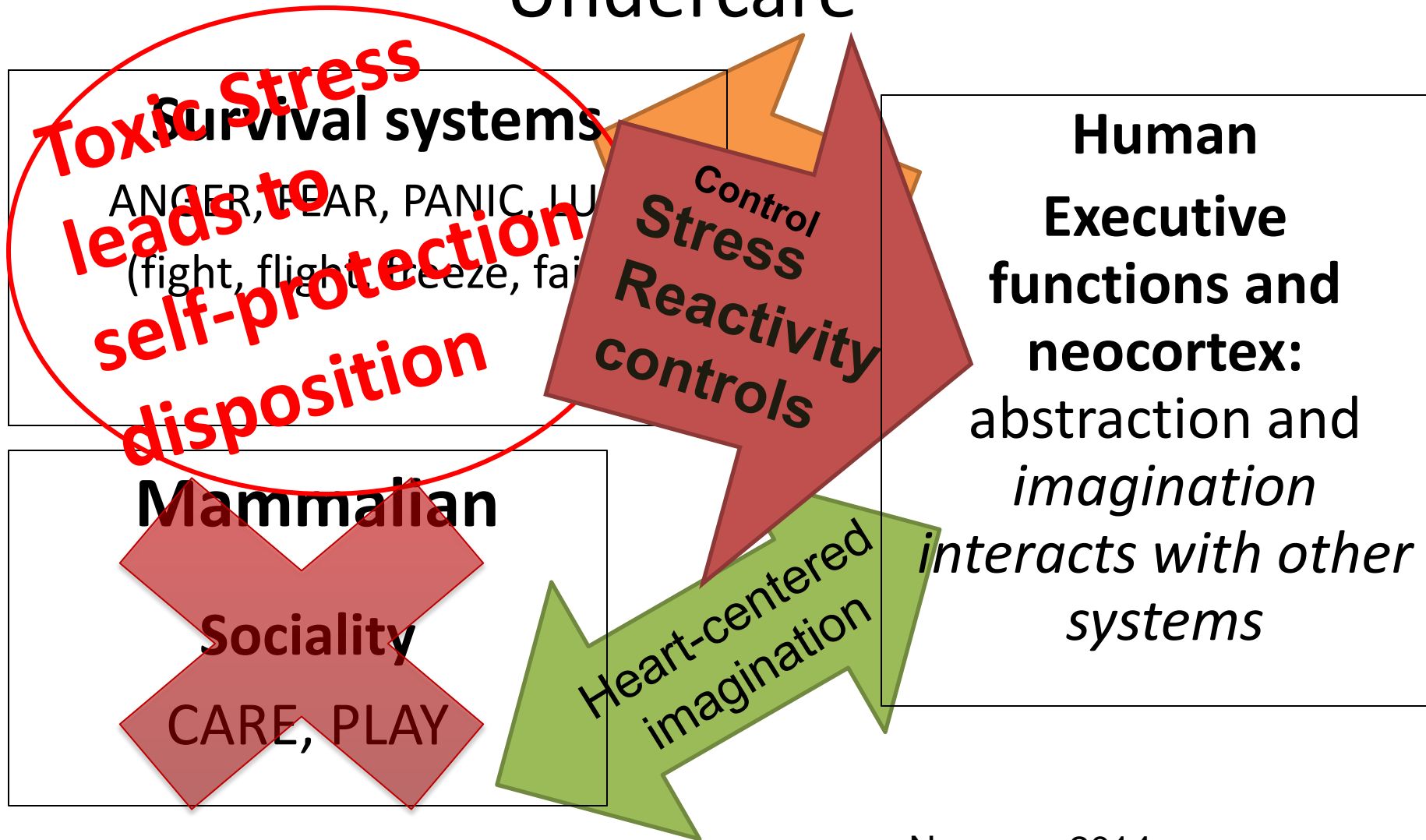
Early experience sets up structure and function of physiology

- Stress response
- Immune system
- Endocrine system
- Neurotransmitters (number, function)
- Emotions and emotion systems
- Corpus callosum and brain hemispheric integration



Gaps or lesions in brain systems from early trauma, abuse, neglect, or undercare

Power of Survival Systems from Early Undercare



Protectionist Mindsets:

One-Up or One-Down (coercive relations)



SOCIAL OPPOSITION

- **“Fight”**
 - Based in the sympathetic system
- **Defensive or reactive aggression**
 - Feels “good” and “right”
- **Self-preservational externalizing**

SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL

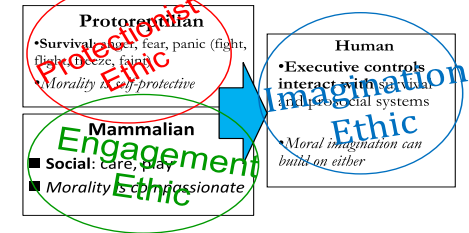


- **“Freezing” / “Fainting”**
 - Based in the systems that protect body from death or psychological trauma
- **Submission, passivity, disappearance**
 - Compliance with an authority
- **Self-preservational internalizing**

Protectionist Imagination Mindsets



Triune Ethics Meta-Theory



Vicious Imagination

- Fueled by anger, aggression, dominance, need for control
- Un-egalitarian (power over the Other)
 - Scapegoating
 - “Eliminationism” (Neiwert, 2010)
 - “Moral mandate” (Skitka)
 - “Impositional altruism”

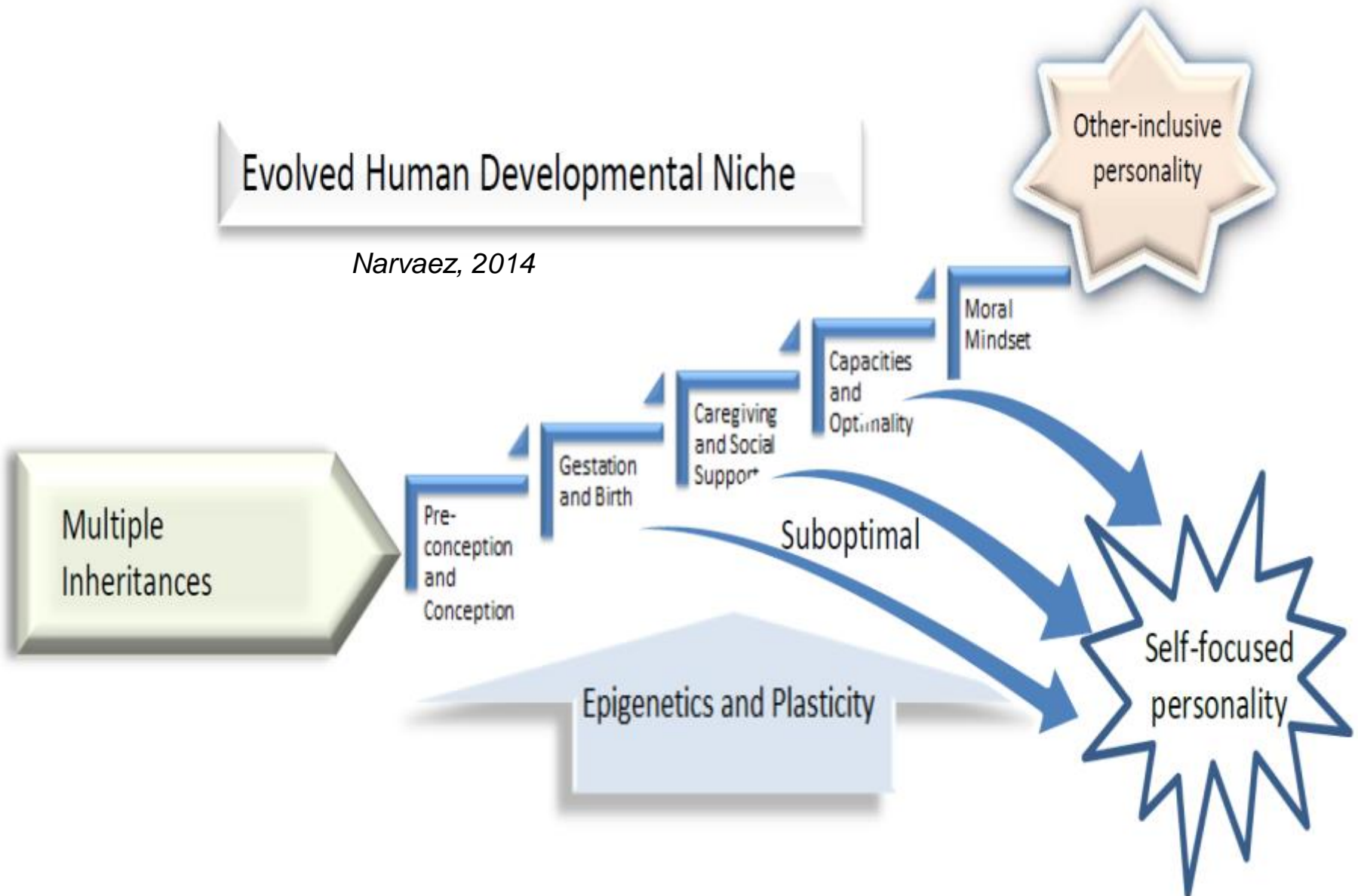


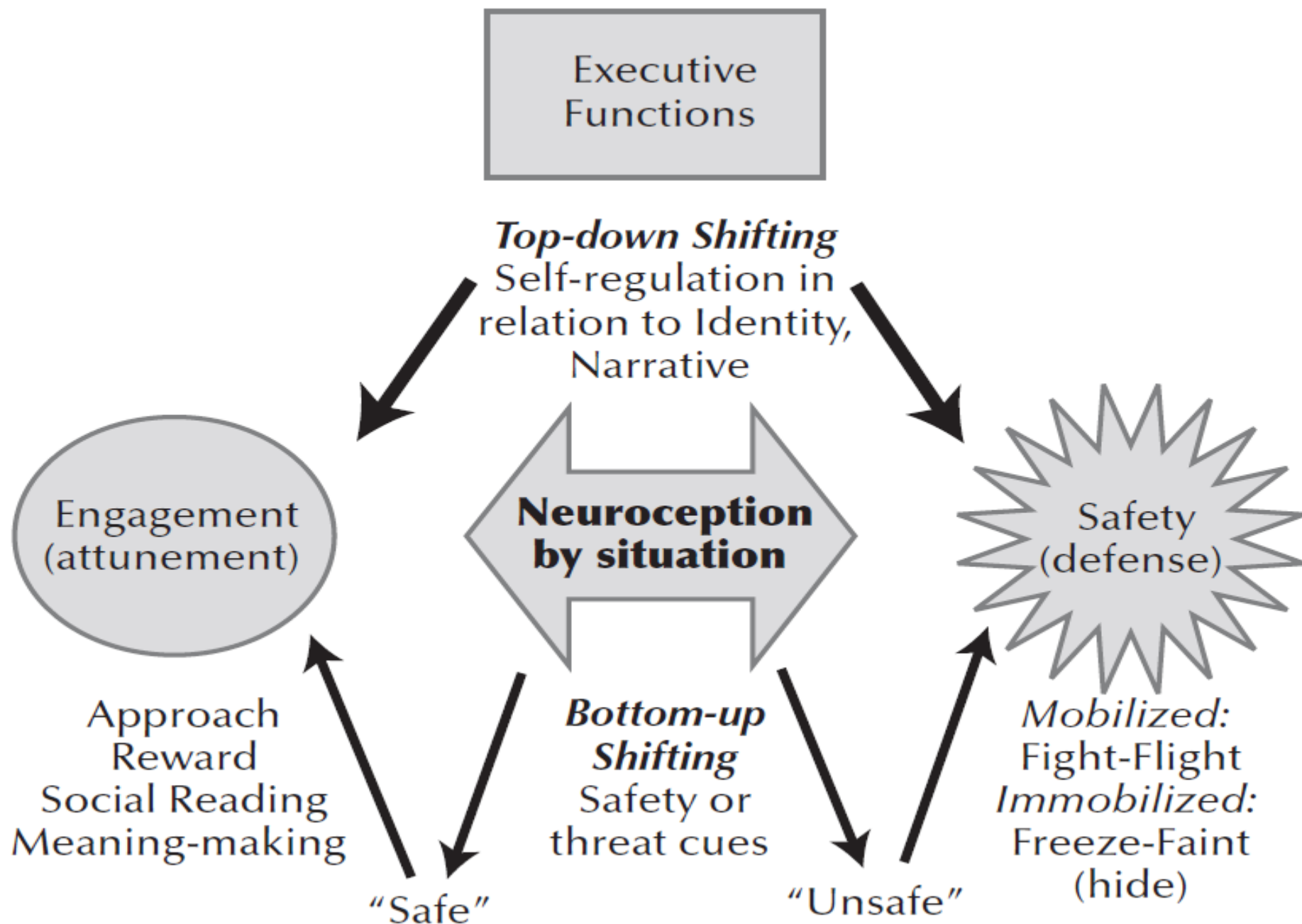
Detached Imagination (Intellect)

- Lack of attuned relationship
- Emotionally cool or cold
- Categorizes and stereotypes
- Objectifies, dissects and orders
- Decontextualizes
- Seeks control, power over objects
- Seeks a firm, certain answer
- Calculates usefulness of other people and things
- Innovation without a sense of consequence

Evolved Human Developmental Niche

Narvaez, 2014







The Sustaining, Healing Classroom

Restoring our human capacities

Protoreptilian

- *Learn Self-Calming*
Survival systems: anger, fear, panic (fight, flight, freeze, faint)

Mammalian

- *Experience Social Joy*
Social: care, play

Executive functions and neocortex:

imagination interacts with survival and prosocial systems

The sustaining healing classroom promotes

(Narvaez, 2010)

- **Self-Calming**
 - Deep breathing
 - Mindfulness
 - Meditation
- **Communal Imagination**
 - Group attachment
 - Us and Us
 - Ecological attachment
- **Social Pleasure**
 - Self-directed physical play with peers
 - Silly humor
 - Social dance, song, art

*Think of one thing in
each area you can do
in your classroom*

THE ETHICAL CLASSROOM

Initiated under the Minnesota Community Voices and
Character Education project funded by USDE OERI Grant #
R215V980001

How do children grow into morally agile adults?

Relationships (classroom & wider community)

Apprenticeship (modeling, guidance)

Virtuous models

Ethical skills (sensitivity, judgment, focus, action)

Self authorship

Integrated across academic instruction, homeroom/advisory, schoolwide projects

Caring, Responsive Relationship with each Child

- Engages the **emotions**
 - Fundamental to learning
- Fosters a **secure attachment**
 - Builds the bridge for instruction
 - Secures the child's attention
 - Establishes a line of influence
 - Physiological orientation toward relational attunement (oxytocin, opioids)
- May take longer with some students



Photo:By Elizabeth Ann Colette - Flickr, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2178973>

Provide a Supportive **Relational** Social Climate

- Keep members calm
- Face-to-face relational engagement
- Encourage prosocial imagination
- Individual positive purpose
 - Enhancement of human potential
- Broad ethical skills
- Global awareness
- Link to community contexts

• [Project 365 Day 131: Group Hug!](#)
Uploaded by [MaybeMaybeMaybe](#)



Photo: Wikimedia Commons: Project 365 Day 131: Group hug

How do people learn naturally?

Apprenticeship!

- How does apprenticeship look?
 - **Modeling** by someone more “expert”
 - thinks aloud while solving problems
 - Instructor **coaches** the student
 - Instructor **explains** (reasoning, meaning) at the same time as authentic experience
 - Student **practice** is *focused and extensive*



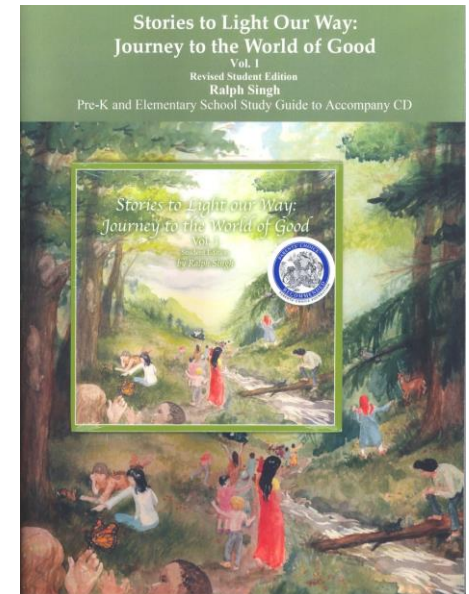
Virtuous Village

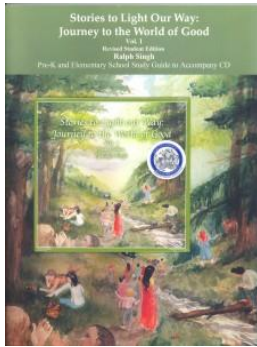
- Generosity
- Respect
- Kindness
- Compassion
- Forgiveness
- Humility
- Courage
- Multiple examples of virtue
- Opportunities to imitate
- Practice, practice, practice



Virtuous Village of Stories, Safety and Support

- Adults come together with their stories about their own development
- Understand that their own characters are “under construction”
 - by the activities they pursue
 - by how they use their imaginations





The Power of Stories

- Shape what we believe about ourselves and the world
 - they guide our actions
- Children learn whom they can/should become
 - from the stories we tell them
 - *how we treat them is a type of story they internalize*

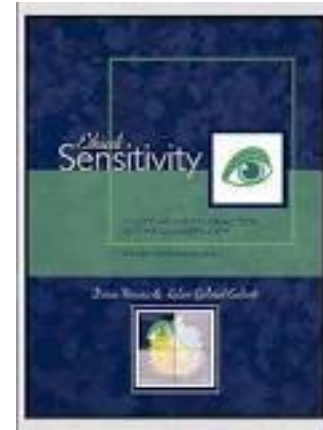
Ethical Skills: A Toolbox

1. Ethical Sensitivity
2. Ethical Judgment
3. Ethical Focus
4. Ethical Action



Ethical Skills to Embed in Classroom Instruction

Those with Ethical Expertise are:



- More Ethically Sensitive (*perceptive, imaginative, deeply feeling*)
- Better at Ethical Judgment (*reasoning, reflective*)
- More Ethically Focused (*attentive, motivated, personal identity*)
- Better at Completing Ethical Action (*effective, steadfastness*)

Self-Authorship

- Virtuous individuals must be autonomous enough to monitor their behavior and choices.
- Once developed, virtues must be maintained through the selection of appropriate friends, activities and environments (Aristotle, 1988).



Ethical Character Development through **RAVES**

Relationships (classroom & wider community)

Apprenticeship (modeling, guidance, practice)

Virtuous models

Ethical skills (sensitivity, judgment, focus, action)

Self authorship

RAVES Together

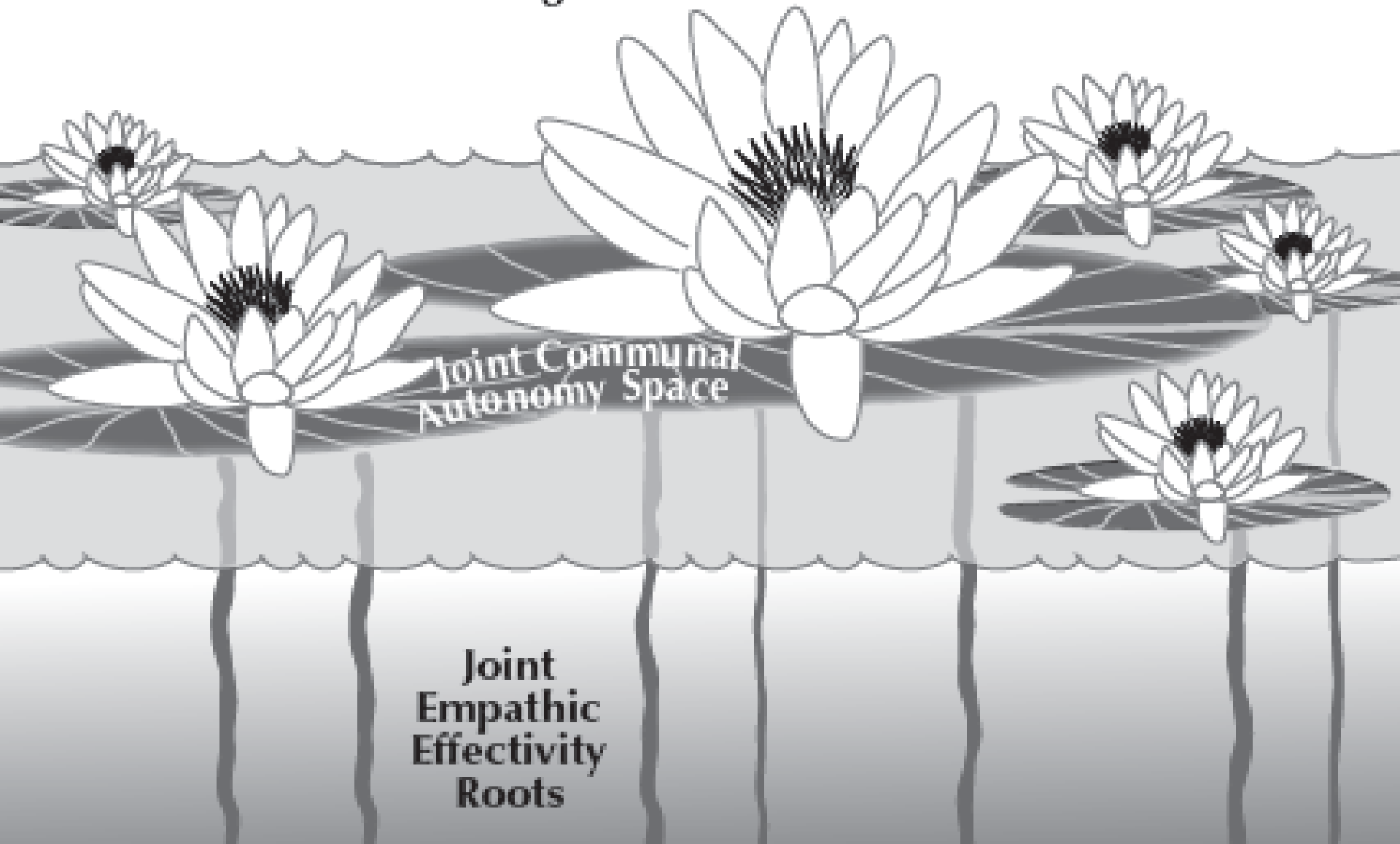
- ❑ The purpose of ethical behavior is to live a good life *in the community*.
- ❑ Each individual lives within an active ecological context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) in which, ideally, the entire community builds ethical skills together.



Our Heritage: Cycle of Cooperative Companionship

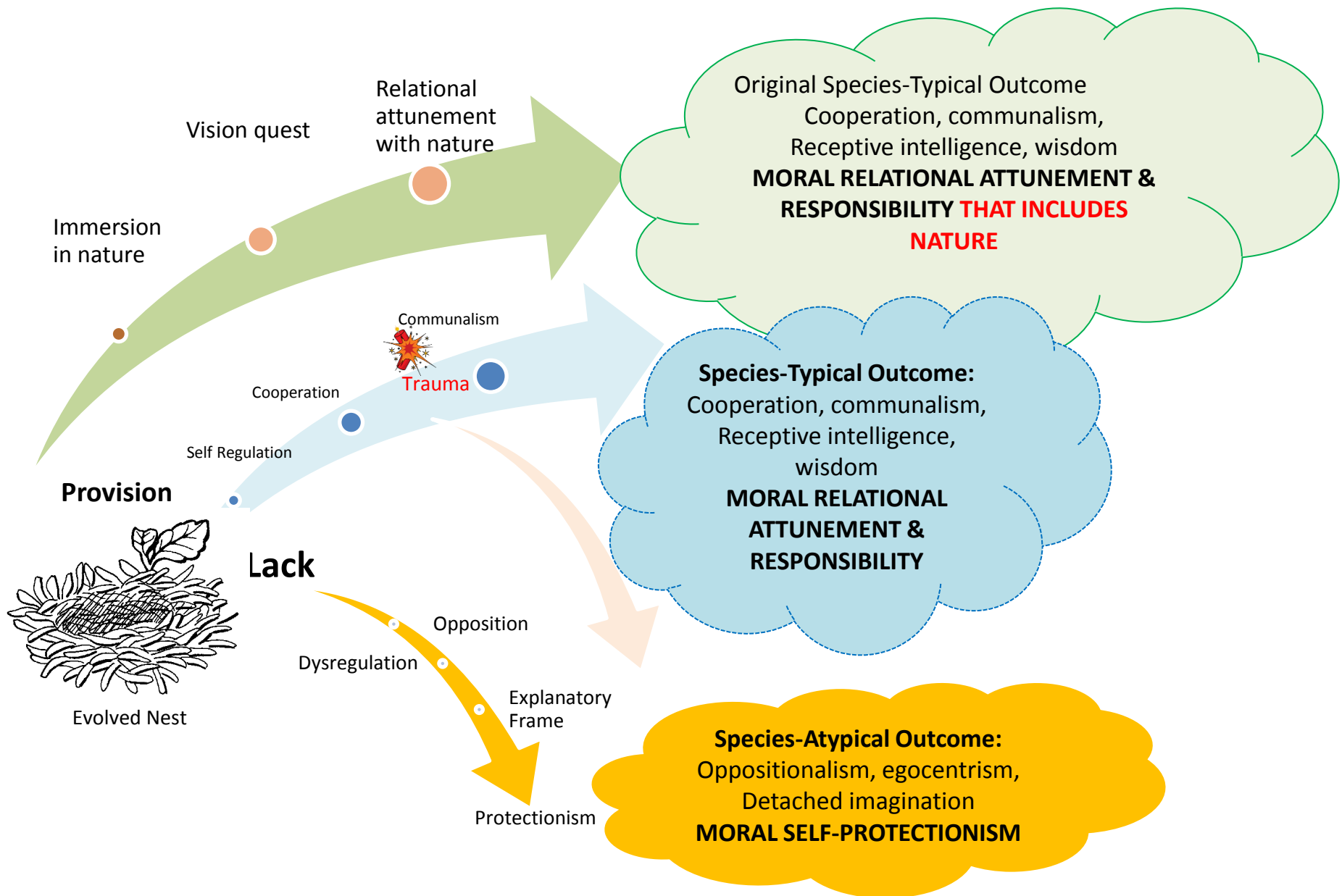


Joint Communal Imagination



**Joint Communal
Autonomy Space**

**Joint
Empathic
Effectivity
Roots**



For more information

Darcia Narvaez, University of Notre Dame (dnarvaez@nd.edu)

Free MATERIALS for EDUCATORS:

http://www3.nd.edu/~dnarvaez/Workshops_Materials_2012.htm

Webpage (download papers):

<http://www.nd.edu/~dnarvaez/>

My blog at Psychology Today:

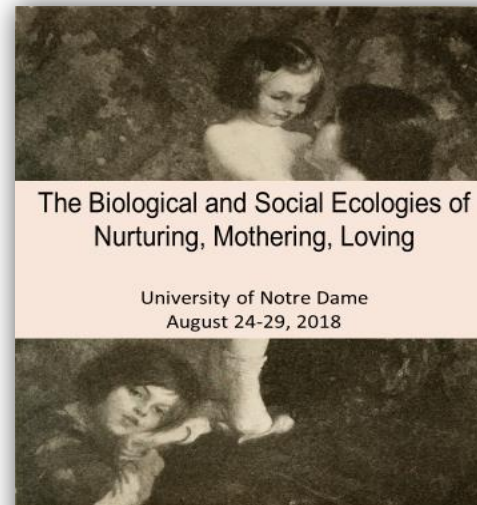
“Moral Landscapes”

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/moral-landscapes>

THANKS TO

- **Templeton Religion Trust**
- **Spencer Foundation**
- **University of Notre Dame**
 - College of Arts and Letters
 - Office of Research
 - Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts
 - Institute for Educational Initiatives
 - Department of Psychology
 - **Evolutionary Developmental Morality Lab**

2018 conference:



*Save the date!
Become a co-sponsor!*

*Organized by
Notre Dame's Shaw Center for Children and Family
& Attachment Parenting International*

Program organizers:

Darcia Narvaez (dnarvaez@nd.edu), with planning committee members: Julia Braungart-Rieker, James McKenna, Kristin Va

Samantha Gray, API (samantha@attachmentparenting.org)

Part 1 Aug 24-26: Community focus: "Nurturing Primal Instincts for Mothering"

Part 2 Aug 26-29: Academic conference: "Biosocial Ecologies of Mothering"

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