

Why Visitors' Self-Related Needs and Motivations Matter



Hey, she's
good looking.
I wonder if
she's single.

John H. Falk
Institute for Learning Innovation

Den Gamle By, November 28, 2017

Q: What would make these people choose to visit this museum on this day?



A: Each and every visitor comes in the hopes of satisfying their personal Self-Related Needs.

Entering Self-Related Needs → What Visitors Do in the Museum → What Meaning Visitors Make



- Visitors use museums to support their entering Self-Related Visit Needs.
- What people remember about their experience is the satisfaction of these Needs.
- Fulfilled Needs correlate with visit satisfaction, return visits and word-of-mouth recommendations.

Explorer

I came here primarily because places like this interest me and I thought I'd like it.



Motivated by Personal Curiosity

Facilitator

I came here primarily because it is safe place and others would like it or wanted to come.



Motivated by Other People

Professional/Hobbyist

I came here primarily because the content relates to my work or is something I actively pursue as a hobby.



Motivated by Specific Knowledge-Related Goals

Experience Seeker



I came here because it was an attraction or thing to do in this community; its reputation.

Motivated by Desire to See & Experience Place

Recharger

I came here primarily because these are places that help me feel refreshed or focused or appreciative.



Motivated by Contemplative or Restorative Experience

Cultural Affinity

Motivated by “S” self

Amenity Seeker

Motivated by Museum’s Physical/Commercial Attributes

Respectful Pilgrim

Motivated by Sense of Duty or Obligation

Dutiful Student

Motivated by Desire to Do What Was Assigned

Model now Validated

- Across nearly every kind of museum-like setting – art, history, science, children’s museums, also parks, gardens, aquariums and zoos.
- Across more than a dozen countries – Denmark, Austria, Germany, France, Netherlands, Britain, Scotland, Canada, U.S., Australia, Mexico, Brazil, Columbia, Taiwan, Malaysia

Great, but doesn’t really answer what NEEDS people are really using museums to satisfy

These 5-9 categories are verbal descriptions of why people believe they visit, but they do not fully capture the underlying NEEDS that drive behavior.



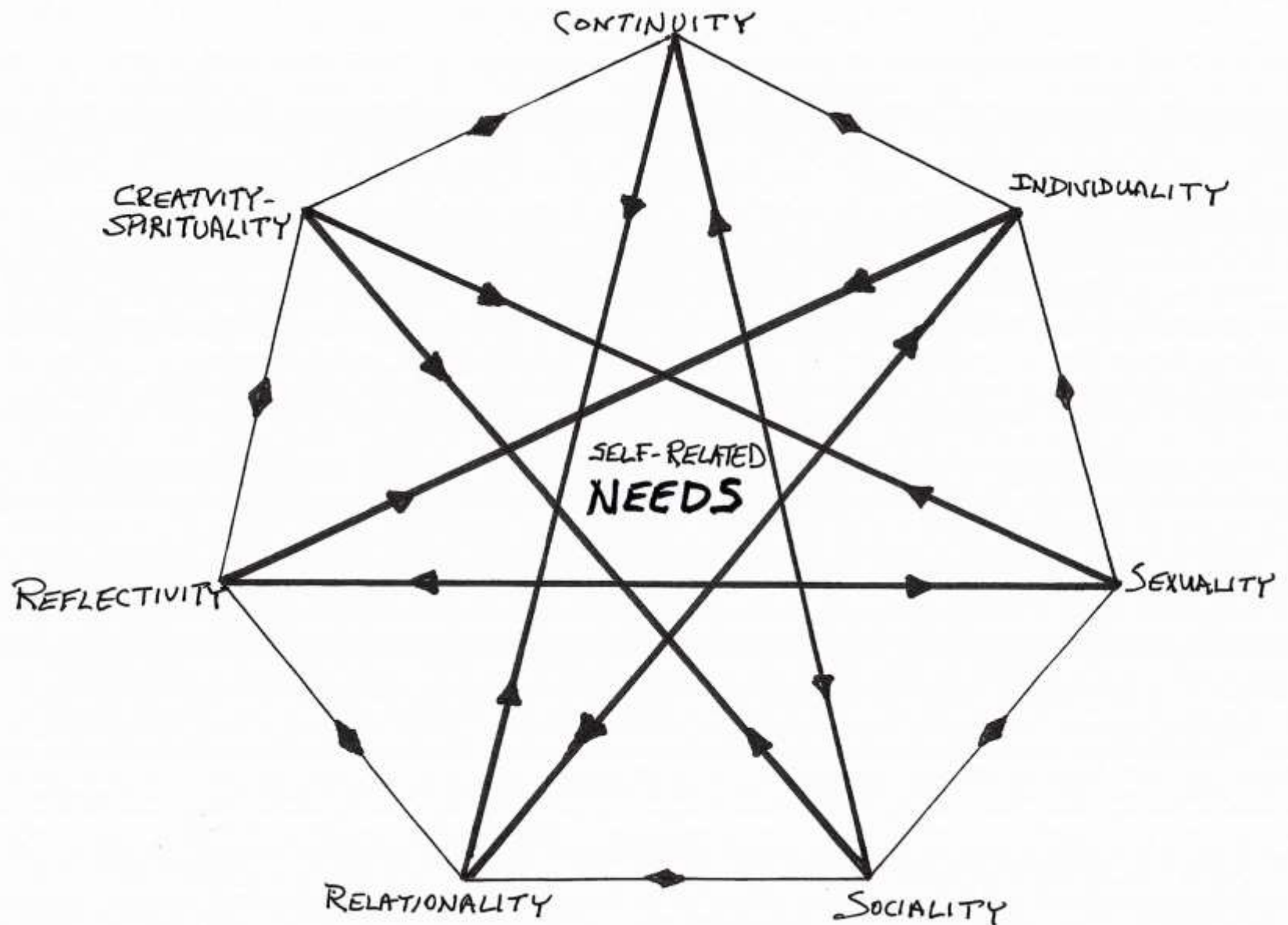
All human choices derive from 1 or typically some combination of 7 core Self-Related NEEDS.

The 7 Core Human Self-Related Needs

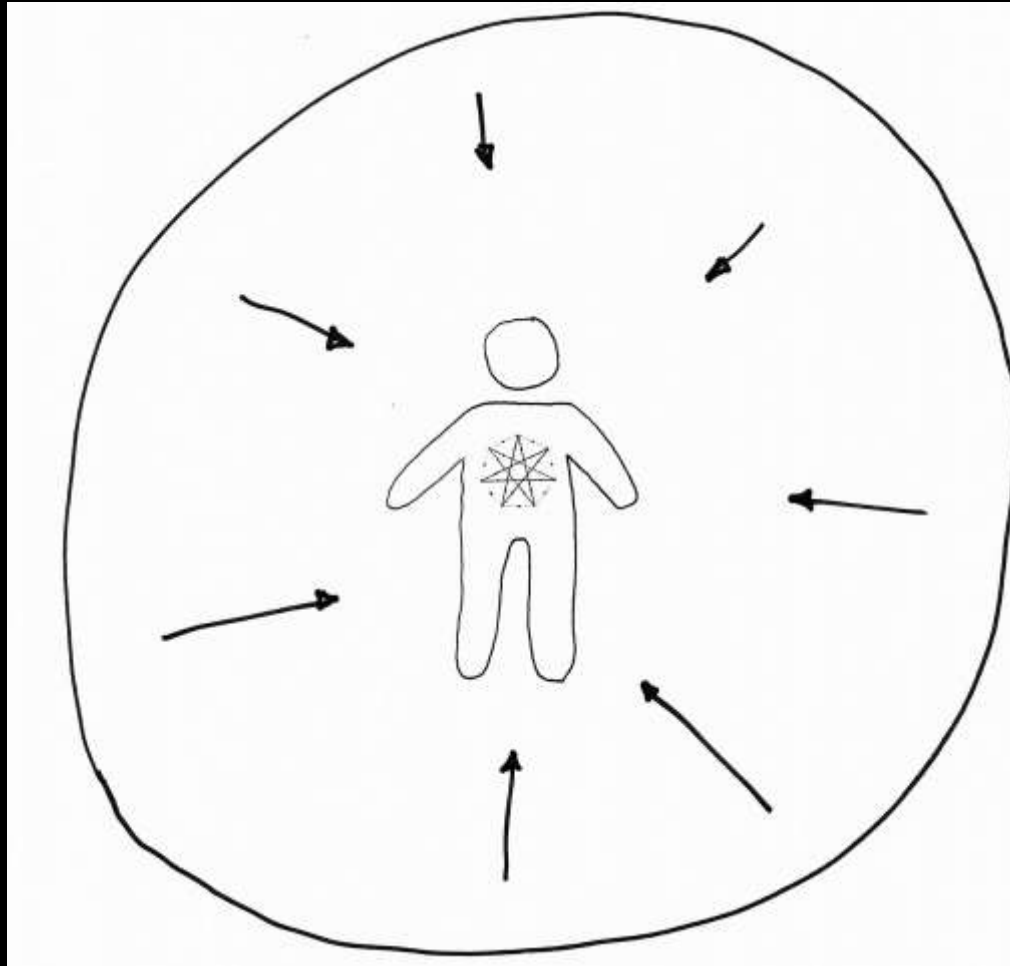
- **Creativity/Spirituality** – The need to feel intellectually and spiritually fulfilled (requires high level abstract thought, and with it the ability to purposefully envision and creatively project one's self into situations unfettered by immediate realities)
- **Reflectivity** – The need to act in ways designed to support my interests and desires (builds on language and the conscious capacity to step outside of one's immediate situation and contemplate and describe both past and future actions)
- **Relationality** – The need to feel respected and appreciated by my social group(s) (requires an ability to consciously perceive how others interpret and respond to one's actions)

- **Sociality** – The need to feel loved and have a sense of belonging to one or more social groups (involves the capacity to see others as important extensions of one’s self, to reciprocally interact with others)
- **Sexuality** – The need to be successful in attracting and “sexually bonding” with others (involves the ability to recognize and respond to others based on sexual identity; historically for the purpose of reproduction)
- **Individuality** – The need to be safe, secure and insure a unique and separate identity (requires an ability to see one’s self as distinct, not only from other humans but also non-humans; to perceive and react to threats)
- **Continuity** – The need to stay physically strong and well (involves the ability to act in ways that increase physiological health and fitness)

The 7 Core Self-Related Needs

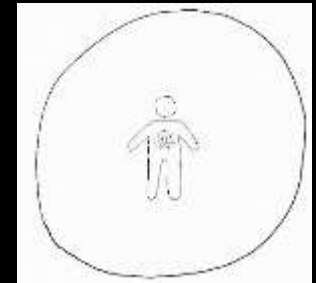
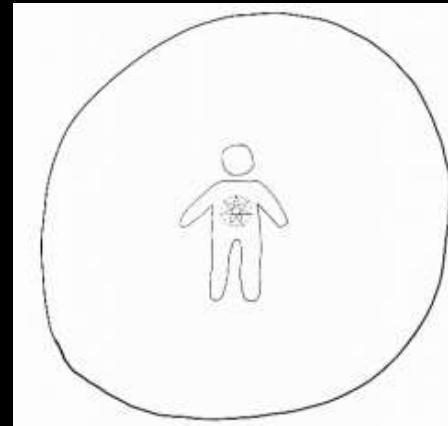
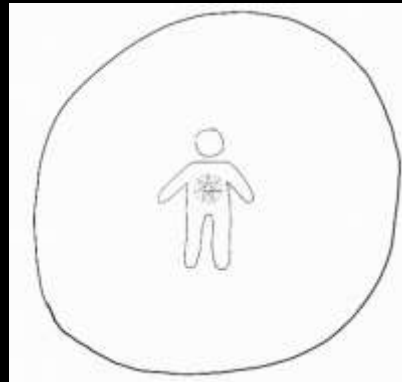
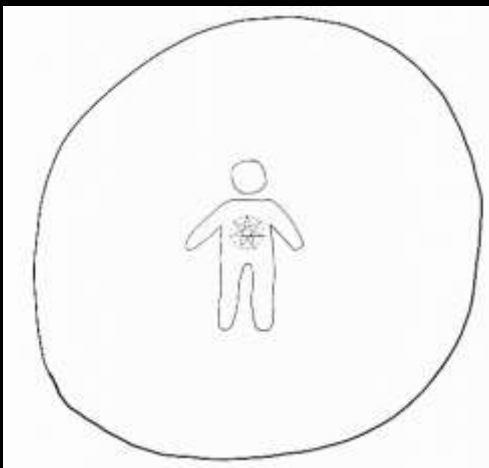
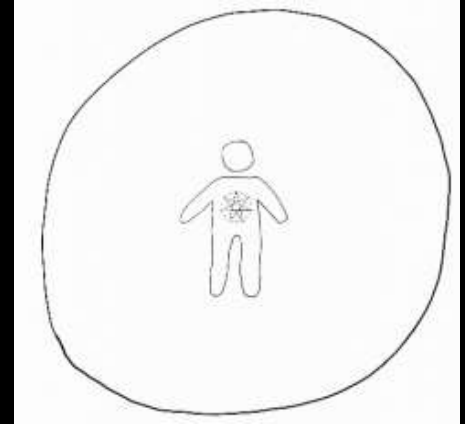
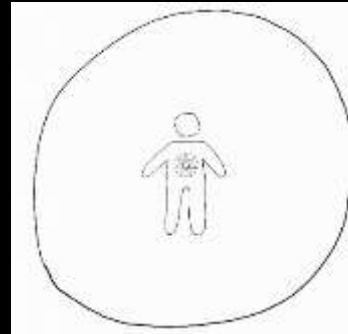
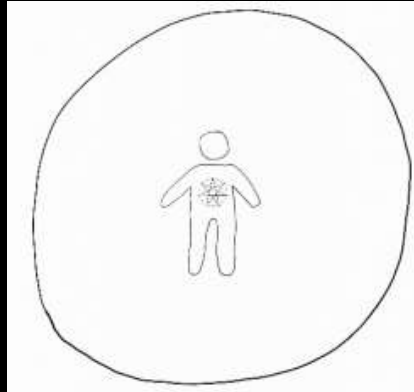
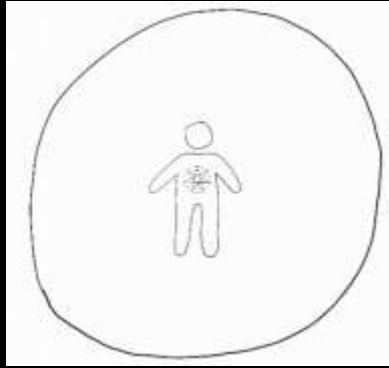


People do not live in isolation. Each person is immersed within a SocioCultural Milieu.



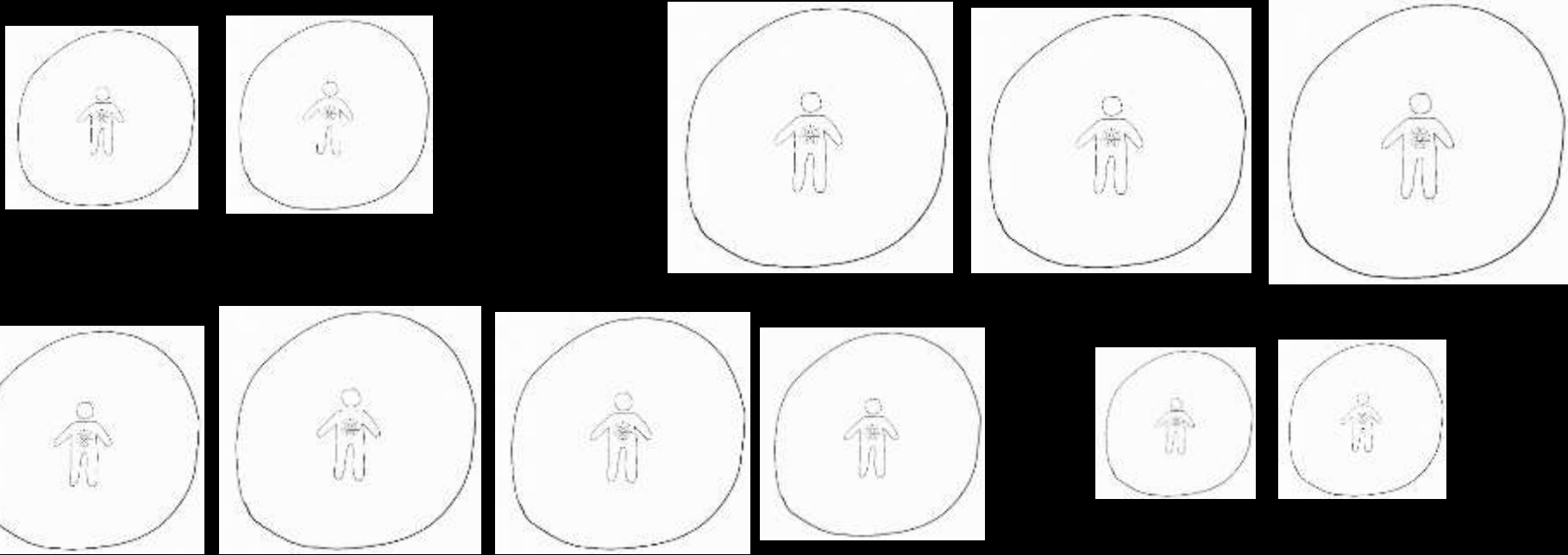
A person's SocioCultural milieu influences how her Self-Related NEEDS are expressed.

Of course, every person is unique, and so too is his SocialCultural Milieu.



How similar or different two people are depends upon their genes and their **LIVED EXPERIENCE.**

Individuals with similar genes and lived experiences are more alike than are those with dissimilar genes and lived experiences; similar people share similar ways of perceiving and describing their needs.

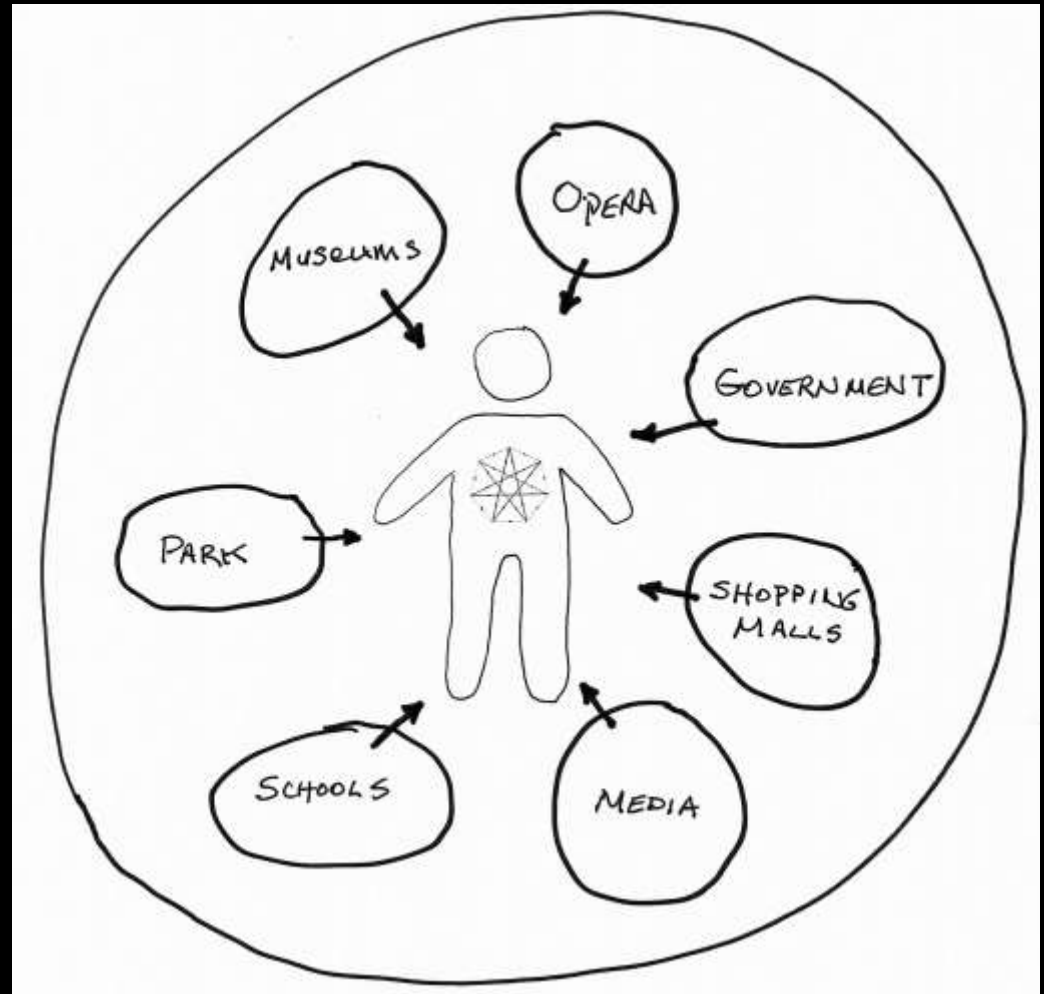


This is why demographic variables like age, gender and nationality frequently (but not always) correlate with behavior and verbal descriptions converge.

Each person's SocioCultural Milieu is made up of of a wide variety institutions.

Each of these institutions arose in order to (ideally) satisfy the Self-Related Needs of some group of individuals.

Museums are no exception.



Hence for some people, museums are great places to “Facilitate” the needs of others!

I came here primarily because it is safe place and others would like it or wanted to come.



People visit museums because they perceive that a match exists between their needs and what they think the institution affords.

Facilitators:

People (typically adults) who say they come to museum-like settings because of others.

- Adults who visit museums because they are parents and say they are visiting for their children, **sociality**, but when probed they say they hope experience will support their children's current and future interests and well-being, which is **reflectivity**, but potentially it is also about the parent's **relationality** since many parents want to be perceived as a good parent, someone who does these kinds of things for their children.



Facilitators:

People (typically adults) who say they come to museum-like settings because of others.

- At museum to support their significant other, which is ***sociality***, the desire to have a sense of belonging. But in addition, they may have also been motivated by their own curiosity and interests – ***creativity/spirituality***; and or their knowledge that the museum has a really nice gift shop and they could get some shopping done – ***reflectivity***, or café – ***continuity***.



Getting at the ultimate underlying needs helps us think about how to apply these ideas to practice: marketing & programming.

Ultimately, it is all about satisfying each & every individual's Self-Related Needs, as filtered thru their Lived Experience.



john.falk@freechoicelarning.org