

AI-01708 Human Tendencies

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List 22 fundamental human tendencies.

While there isn't one universally agreed-upon list of exactly 22 "fundamental human tendencies," various psychological, sociological, and philosophical frameworks attempt to categorize core aspects of human behavior and motivation.

Drawing from common themes in these disciplines, here is a list that aims to capture 22 fundamental human tendencies:

1. **Self-Preservation:** The drive to protect oneself from harm and ensure survival.
2. **Reproduction/Procreation:** The innate urge to perpetuate one's genes and species.
3. **Belonging/Social Connection:** The need to form relationships, be part of a group, and feel accepted.
4. **Achievement/Competence:** The desire to master skills, succeed in tasks, and feel capable.
5. **Curiosity/Exploration:** The inclination to seek new information, understand the world, and explore unknown territories.
6. **Autonomy/Control:** The need to feel a sense of agency, make one's own choices, and control one's destiny.
7. **Meaning-Making/Purpose:** The search for significance, understanding one's place in the world, and having a reason to live.
8. **Fairness/Justice:** The desire for equitable treatment, adherence to rules, and the correction of wrongs.

9. **Reciprocity:** The tendency to respond to positive actions with positive actions, and vice versa.
10. **Empathy/Compassion:** The capacity to understand and share the feelings of others, and to desire their well-being.
11. **Hierarchy/Status-Seeking:** The inclination to establish social order and seek recognition or a higher position within a group.
12. **Nurturing/Caregiving:** The drive to protect and support the vulnerable, especially offspring.
13. **Play/Recreation:** The need for enjoyment, spontaneous activity, and relief from seriousness.
14. **Beauty/Aesthetics:** The appreciation for and attraction to visually pleasing forms, sounds, and experiences.
15. **Novelty-Seeking:** The desire for new experiences, changes, and variety.
16. **Security/Stability:** The need for predictability, safety, and a sense of order.
17. **Expression/Creativity:** The urge to communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas through various forms.
18. **Gratification/Pleasure-Seeking:** The pursuit of enjoyable sensations and experiences.
19. **Avoidance of Pain/Discomfort:** The instinct to minimize unpleasant physical or emotional states.
20. **Cognitive Consistency/Reduction of Dissonance:** The drive to maintain coherence in one's beliefs and attitudes, and to reduce internal conflict.
21. **Self-Enhancement/Positive Self-Regard:** The tendency to maintain or boost one's self-esteem and view oneself favorably.
22. **Learning/Adaptation:** The capacity and drive to acquire new knowledge and skills, and to adjust to changing circumstances.

Fundamental Human Tendencies: A Comprehensive Synthesis

1. Introduction: Understanding Fundamental Human Tendencies

Fundamental human tendencies represent universal, inherent patterns of behavior, drives, or needs that guide human perception, action, and adaptation to the environment. These deeply rooted aspects of human nature persist across time and culture, although their specific manifestations can vary significantly. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a "tendency" as "an impelling force that will manifest if not counteracted". Dr. Maria Montessori, a pioneer in educational philosophy, posited these tendencies as "universal aspects of human behaviour" that aid in "understanding and adapting to our environment". Similarly, "drives" are conceptualized as "bodily tension that serves as a motivator," often linked to overcoming deficiencies or diminishing negative experiences.

The concept of human tendencies is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing from diverse fields such as psychology, anthropology, philosophy, and evolutionary biology. For instance, evolutionary psychology seeks to identify "evolved emotional and cognitive adaptations that represent 'human psychological nature'", while anthropology identifies "cultural universals" common to all known human cultures, collectively forming what is often referred to as the "human condition". Philosophical perspectives on "human nature" often distinguish between features that are not the result of human intentional action (i.e., "natural") and those shaped by culture or social influence. This report focuses on the former—the underlying, intrinsic forces that shape human experience.

The very definition and categorization of "human tendencies" or "human nature" are subjects of ongoing academic discussion. Various terms are employed across disciplines, including "tendencies" by Montessori, "drives" by Josh Kaufman, "needs" in Maslow's Hierarchy and Self-Determination Theory, "desires" by Steven Reiss, and "universals" by Donald Brown. This terminological diversity highlights that there is no single, universally agreed-upon conceptualization or definitive list of these fundamental aspects. Different theoretical frameworks emphasize distinct facets, whether biological impetus, psychological states, or social manifestations. Furthermore, the concept of "human nature" itself is debated, with some scholars viewing it as immutable, while others contend it is significantly shaped by culture and circumstance. This underscores that any compiled list, including the 22 presented here, represents a synthesis and

interpretation based on current academic understanding, acknowledging the complexity and adaptability inherent in human behavior.

This report synthesizes insights from these various disciplines to present a comprehensive list of 22 fundamental human tendencies. The aim is to provide a multi-faceted understanding of the core drivers of human behavior, acknowledging their theoretical underpinnings and practical implications.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Human Tendencies

Understanding fundamental human tendencies requires an appreciation of the various theoretical frameworks that have sought to explain human motivation and behavior. Over time, psychological and anthropological thought has evolved, moving from simpler explanations to more nuanced and comprehensive models. This progression reflects a deeper understanding of human complexity and adaptability, shifting from rigid "instincts" to flexible "tendencies" and "drives." Early theories, such as Instinct Theory, proposed that motivations were rooted in biological and genetic structures, asserting that some, like the drive to survive, are universal. However, these early models were often criticized for not explaining the full spectrum of human behavior and for restricting human actions to simple, fixed directives, much like animal instincts.

The shift in terminology from "instinct" to "tendency" or "drive" signifies a crucial conceptual advancement. Human tendencies are now understood as forces that stimulate development and allow for endless flexibility in adjusting to diverse and changing environments, profoundly differing from the restrictive nature of animal instincts. This evolution in theoretical framing acknowledges that while underlying universal forces exist, their manifestation is not rigidly programmed but highly adaptable, enabling self-construction and adjustment. This deeper understanding moves beyond a purely mechanistic view, incorporating cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions, and recognizing that human behavior is driven by higher-order psychological and social needs in addition to basic biological urges.

Montessori's Human Tendencies

Dr. Maria Montessori posited "fundamental human tendencies" as universal aspects of human behavior that aid adaptation and self-construction within the environment. Her son, Mario Montessori Sr., further elaborated on these beliefs in

"The Human Tendencies and Montessori Education". Montessori viewed these tendencies as "basic human modes of living and being, universal laws that govern our perception of the world, determine our actions and behaviours in order to aid our adaptation to the world". She emphasized their distinction from animal instincts, highlighting their role in stimulating development and fostering human flexibility. While not a fixed, exhaustive list, key tendencies mentioned in Montessori philosophy include **Exploration** (the drive to learn about the environment for security) and **Orientation** (the process of making sense of acquired knowledge and finding one's place). Montessori stressed that these tendencies form a "complex, interrelated system that cannot be broken down into its parts".

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Alderfer's ERG Theory

Abraham Maslow's influential "Hierarchy of Needs," proposed in 1943, categorizes human motivations into a five-tier pyramid: **Physiological** (basic survival needs like food, water, air), **Safety** (security, stability), **Love/Belonging** (relationships, connection), **Esteem** (confidence, respect), and **Self-Actualization** (exploring innate potential). Maslow suggested that lower-level "deficiency needs" must be sufficiently met before higher-level "growth needs" become prominent motivators.

Clayton Alderfer's ERG theory (Existence, Relatedness, Growth) offers a more flexible alternative to Maslow's strict hierarchy. In ERG theory, individuals may pursue higher-level needs even if lower-level ones are not fully satisfied, and multiple needs can be active simultaneously. This model provides a more dynamic understanding of how human motivations can shift and interact.

Steven Reiss's 16 Basic Desires

Psychologist Steven Reiss, in collaboration with Susan Havercamp, identified 16 "basic desires" that are intrinsically valued, have explanatory significance for nearly everyone, and are largely unconnected to other desires. These are considered "universal goals" and "life motives" that drive nearly everything people do. The 16 desires include: **Acceptance, Curiosity, Eating, Family, Honor, Idealism, Independence, Order, Physical Activity, Power, Romance, Saving, Social Contact, Status, Tranquility, and Vengeance**. Reiss's work highlights the

individual variability in the intensity of these desires, which collectively shape personality.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposes that all humans have three basic psychological needs that are essential for growth and development: **Autonomy** (the feeling of choice and willingness to endorse one's behavior), **Competence** (the experience of mastery and effectiveness), and **Relatedness** (the need to feel connected and a sense of belonging with others). The satisfaction of these needs is crucial for fostering autonomous (intrinsic) motivation, persistence in behavior, and overall well-being. Conversely, when these needs are not met or are actively thwarted, motivation can become controlled by external pressures, leading to decreased satisfaction and success.

Insights from Evolutionary Psychology and Cultural Universals

Evolutionary Psychology posits that human behaviors and psychological mechanisms are adaptations shaped by natural and sexual selection over humanity's evolutionary past. This perspective suggests that the human brain has evolved specialized functions, or cognitive modules, to solve specific problems encountered by ancestral humans, such as language acquisition, mate choice, and the detection of cheaters. While some behaviors were highly adaptive during prehistoric times, they may not always function optimally in modern, human-made environments.

Cultural Universals, as defined by anthropologist Donald Brown, are "features of culture, society, language, behavior, and psyche for which there are no known exception" across all known human cultures. These universals encompass elements like grammar, myths, daily routines, social structures (e.g., family, law), beliefs (e.g., about death, disease), and technology (e.g., tools, fire). Evolutionary psychologists often consider universally occurring behaviors or traits as strong candidates for evolutionary adaptations. It is important to note that some of Brown's specific examples, particularly regarding gender relations and sexuality, have faced criticism from other anthropologists who cite ethnographic evidence contradicting their purported universality.

Cognitive Biases

While not "tendencies" in the motivational sense, **cognitive biases** are systematic "errors in cognition" that reveal fundamental patterns in how humans process information and make decisions. These biases represent inherent mental shortcuts (heuristics) that, while often leading to efficient decision-making, can also result in predictable deviations from rationality. Examples include **Overconfidence**, **Self-serving bias**, **Herd Mentality**, **Loss Aversion**, **Framing**, **Narrative Fallacy**, **Anchoring**, and **Confirmation Bias**. These biases highlight inherent human inclinations towards certain interpretations or shortcuts, even if flawed, and are particularly relevant in fields like behavioral finance.

3. The 22 Fundamental Human Tendencies: A Comprehensive Synthesis

This section presents a synthesized list of 22 fundamental human tendencies, drawing from the various theoretical frameworks discussed. Each tendency is defined, contextualized, and linked to its primary theoretical origins, providing a comprehensive overview of the core drivers of human behavior.

Table 1: The 22 Fundamental Human Tendencies

Tendency	Concise Definition	Primary Theoretical Origins
Acquisition	The desire to obtain, collect, and possess material and immaterial things.	Kaufman (Drive to Acquire), Reiss (Saving)
Affiliation & Belonging	The fundamental need to form relationships, feel valued, loved, and connected with others.	Maslow (Love/Belonging), Alderfer (Relatedness), SDT (Relatedness), Kaufman (Drive to Bond), Reiss (Social Contact, Acceptance), Brown (Family, Kin groups, Peer groups)
Autonomy & Self-Direction	The desire to feel choice, willingly endorse one's behavior, and be self-reliant.	SDT (Autonomy), Reiss (Independence)

Competence & Mastery	The experience of being effective, capable, and achieving mastery in one's activities.	SDT (Competence), Reiss (Power, Status)
Curiosity & Understanding	The intrinsic desire to satisfy curiosity, gain knowledge, and make sense of the world.	Kaufman (Drive to Learn), Reiss (Curiosity), Montessori (Orientation)
Defense & Security	The desire to protect oneself, loved ones, and property from harm.	Kaufman (Drive to Defend), Maslow (Safety Needs), Reiss (Tranquility)
Emotional & Sensory Experience	The desire for new sensory stimuli, intense emotional experiences, pleasure, and excitement.	Kaufman (Drive to Feel), Arousal Theory, Reiss (Romance, Physical Activity)
Exploration	The fundamental drive to come out, meet, and learn about one's environment.	Montessori (Exploration)
Family & Nurturing	The desire to raise children, prioritize their needs, and spend time with close familial relations.	Reiss (Family), Brown (Family, Kin groups)
Honor & Integrity	The desire for upright character, adherence to moral codes, and loyalty to heritage.	Reiss (Honor), Brown (Moral sentiments)
Idealism & Social Justice	The desire for social justice, equity, and fairness.	Reiss (Idealism), Brown (Law, Redress of wrongs)
Order & Structure	The desire for organization, planning, stability, and predictability.	Reiss (Order)
Physical Activity	The intrinsic desire for muscle exercise, physical movement, and vigorous activities.	Reiss (Physical Activity)

Physiological Sustenance	The fundamental need for basic biological requirements such as food, water, and shelter.	Maslow (Physiological needs), Reiss (Eating), Drive-Reduction Theory
Power & Influence	The desire to influence others, achieve, and exert one's will.	Kaufman (Drive to Acquire), Reiss (Power), Maslow (Esteem)
Reproduction & Sexuality	The desire for sex, beauty, and the continuation of the species.	Reiss (Romance), Evolutionary Psychology, Brown (Marriage, Incest prevention, Sexual jealousy)
Ritual & Ceremony	The universal tendency to engage in formalized, symbolic actions and ceremonies.	Brown (Rites of passage, Death rituals, Special speech)
Symbolism & Meaning-Making	The innate capacity to create, interpret, and use symbols, metaphors, and narratives.	Brown (Figurative speech, Symbolism, Myths, Dream interpretation), Narrative Fallacy
Tool Making & Innovation	The fundamental adaptive drive to create, use, and improve tools and technologies.	Brown (Tools, Control of fire, Cooking, Weapons)
Vengeance & Retribution	The desire to confront, get even with, or seek punishment against those who offend.	Reiss (Vengeance), Evolutionary Psychology (hostility toward cheaters)
Cognitive Efficiency & Bias	The inherent tendency to employ mental shortcuts, often resulting in systematic errors in reasoning.	Cognitive Bias (Confirmation Bias, Loss Aversion, Anchoring, Herd Mentality)
Adaptation & Adjustment	The overarching, meta-tendency to adjust to and utilize the environment for survival and thriving.	Montessori (Adaptation), Evolutionary Psychology (Adaptive mechanisms)

Detailed Elaboration of Each Tendency

1. **Acquisition:** The intrinsic desire to obtain, collect, and possess material objects, as well as immaterial qualities such as status, power, or influence. This drive extends beyond mere necessity to accumulation. This fundamental inclination is a powerful engine within human societies, manifesting as a pursuit of wealth and resources, often for security, prestige, or future utility. The pervasive nature of this drive is evident in the formation of entire economic sectors, from retail to investment brokerages, which are explicitly structured to satisfy this human inclination. When a collective need stemming from this drive remains unfulfilled, a market invariably emerges to address it. This direct relationship between the inherent human desire to acquire and the evolution of economic systems underscores that acquisition is not merely an individual psychological characteristic but a foundational force shaping societal organization and global commerce. Consequently, a comprehensive comprehension of this drive becomes indispensable for disciplines such as behavioral economics, marketing, and public policy, as it illuminates the underlying dynamics of industry proliferation and consumer behavior.
2. **Affiliation & Belonging:** This fundamental need involves forming relationships, feeling valued, loved, and connected with others, encompassing both platonic and romantic bonds, as well as a sense of inclusion within groups. It is a central component of Maslow's "Love/Belonging" needs, Alderfer's "Relatedness", and a core basic psychological need in Self-Determination Theory. The desire for companionship with peers and positive self-regard are also reflected in Steven Reiss's "Social Contact" and "Acceptance" desires. The universality of "Family or household," "Kin groups," and "Peer groups not based on family" as cultural universals further supports this tendency. This pervasive emphasis across diverse theories, coupled with empirical observations, indicates that social connection is not merely a preference but a fundamental psychological need. Its fulfillment directly correlates with higher well-being and sustained motivation. This suggests that environments (e.g., educational, workplace, healthcare) that fail to support or actively thwart relatedness will inevitably lead to decreased motivation, higher stress, and poorer outcomes. Fostering a sense of belonging and connection is thus a critical consideration for designing effective social systems.
3. **Autonomy & Self-Direction:** The desire to feel one has choice, to willingly endorse one's behavior, and to be self-reliant in making decisions and

pursuing goals. It represents the antithesis of feeling compelled or controlled. This is a core basic psychological need in Self-Determination Theory and strongly reflected in Steven Reiss's "Independence" desire. Research explicitly shows that when individuals feel more autonomous, they are more likely to achieve personal goals, such as health objectives, and demonstrate greater persistence in their behaviors. Conversely, restricting autonomy has been shown to undermine intrinsic motivation. This establishes a clear cause-and-effect relationship: providing choice and acknowledging an individual's perspective leads to higher quality, more sustained motivation, while control or pressure diminishes it. This suggests that for any long-term behavioral change, learning, or goal achievement, fostering a sense of autonomy is more effective than relying solely on external rewards or punishments. Empowering individuals with choice and self-direction is therefore not just a moral good but a practical strategy for enhancing engagement, well-being, and sustained success across various domains, from education to public health.

4. **Competence & Mastery:** The experience of being effective, capable, and achieving mastery in one's activities. It is the desire to feel skilled and to successfully interact with the environment. This is a core basic psychological need in Self-Determination Theory and overlaps with aspects of Steven Reiss's "Power" (desire for influence/achievement) and "Status" (desire for respect based on social standing). Competence is supported by optimal challenges, encouragement, and clear structure. Its development is directly associated with intrinsic motivation and success in learning. This indicates a direct link between the experience of mastery and the internal drive to learn and grow. When individuals feel capable and effective, they are more likely to engage deeply and persist in challenging activities. This suggests that educational systems and professional development programs should prioritize creating environments that foster a sense of competence through appropriate challenges, constructive feedback, and opportunities for skill development. Failing to do so can stifle intrinsic motivation and hinder learning outcomes, as individuals may disengage if they consistently feel ineffective or overwhelmed.
5. **Curiosity & Understanding:** The intrinsic desire to satisfy one's curiosity, to gain knowledge, and to make sense of the world by establishing points of reference and finding one's place within the environment. This is a fundamental drive, articulated as Josh Kaufman's "Drive to Learn" , Steven

Reiss's "Curiosity" desire , and Montessori's "Orientation". This tendency motivates intellectual pursuits, including reading, writing, and conversing. It is essential for adapting to and navigating the environment, as "orientation" involves making sense of acquired knowledge. This indicates that the drive for knowledge is not just about accumulating facts but about actively constructing meaning and finding one's place in the world. It links directly to adaptation as the process of making sense of the environment. This suggests that curiosity is a fundamental cognitive engine for human progress and survival. Societies and educational systems that suppress curiosity may inadvertently hinder innovation and adaptability. Furthermore, the constant human need to "make sense" of information can explain the prevalence of phenomena like the "narrative fallacy" , where people prefer stories even if they lead to less desirable outcomes, as stories provide a coherent framework for understanding complex realities.

6. **Defense & Security:** The desire to protect oneself, loved ones, and property from harm, danger, or threat, leading to behaviors aimed at ensuring safety and stability. This tendency is central to Josh Kaufman's "Drive to Defend" , Maslow's "Safety Needs" , and Steven Reiss's "Tranquility" (the desire to avoid anxiety and pain). This fundamental inclination manifests in actions such as seeking shelter, developing home alarm systems, and pursuing insurance products. While human instincts for defense evolved long ago when humans lived as hunter-gatherers , the businesses built on the drive to defend today, like insurance and legal services, showcase its modern manifestations. This illustrates that while the fundamental inclination to protect and seek safety remains constant, its expression adapts significantly to the prevailing environment. The persistence of this underlying drive, despite radical environmental changes, highlights its core importance for survival and well-being. This also suggests that unmet safety needs, as posited by Maslow , can significantly disrupt higher-level motivations, demonstrating the foundational nature of this tendency.
7. **Emotional & Sensory Experience:** The desire for new sensory stimuli, intense emotional experiences, pleasure, excitement, and entertainment, as well as the drive to regulate one's physiological arousal to an optimal level. This tendency is captured by Josh Kaufman's "Drive to Feel" , Arousal Theory of motivation , and aspects of Steven Reiss's "Romance" (desire for beauty) and

"Physical Activity" (desire for muscle exercise). This inclination drives engagement with arts, sports, movies, concerts, and other forms of entertainment. It also explains why individuals seek activities that either increase arousal (e.g., exercising, going to a nightclub) or decrease it (e.g., meditation, taking a nap) to maintain a state of balance or equilibrium. This indicates a homeostatic principle at play in human emotional and sensory experience. Humans are not simply driven to seek pleasure, but to maintain an *optimal* level of arousal and emotional stimulation. Too little leads to boredom; too much leads to stress. This suggests that the human brain actively seeks a "sweet spot" of stimulation, influencing a vast array of behaviors from leisure choices to risk-taking. Environments that are either too monotonous or too overwhelming will likely lead to dissatisfaction, and effective engagement strategies must consider this inherent drive for emotional balance.

8. **Exploration:** The fundamental drive to come out, meet, and learn about one's environment, serving as the initial step in adaptation and gaining a basic sense of security. This is a cornerstone of Montessori philosophy, explicitly listed as "Exploration". Obeying this tendency is essential for gaining a basic sense of security, which is ultimately the knowledge that the environment can and will fulfill one's needs. It precedes the process of orientation, where acquired knowledge is made sense of. This establishes a clear causal hierarchy: exploration leads to knowledge of the environment, which in turn fosters a sense of security and provides the raw material for self-development and adaptation. Without exploration, adaptation and self-construction are significantly hindered. This suggests that environments, particularly for children but also for adults in novel situations, that restrict or discourage exploration can impede fundamental psychological development and adaptive capacity. Fostering curiosity and providing safe opportunities for discovery are therefore critical for human flourishing and resilience.
9. **Family & Nurturing:** The desire to raise one's own children, prioritize their needs, and spend time with close familial relations, reflecting a deep-seated drive for procreation and care for offspring and kin. This is explicitly identified as Steven Reiss's "Family" desire and is strongly supported by cultural universals such as "Family or household" and "Kin groups". This tendency motivates individuals to place great value on parenthood and be exceptionally attentive to family needs, recognizing that raising children is essential to their

happiness. The presence of this desire as an intrinsic motivator and the universality of family structures across all known human cultures strongly suggest a deep-seated biological and social imperative for procreation, nurturing, and kin-based social organization. This implies that the family unit, in its various forms, is not merely a social construct but a fundamental expression of human tendencies for survival and cultural transmission. Disruptions to family structures or the ability to nurture offspring can have profound psychological and societal consequences, as they challenge a core human drive.

10. **Honor & Integrity:** The desire for upright character, to adhere to moral codes of conduct, to be loyal to one's heritage, and to act in accordance with ethical principles, even when personal sacrifice is involved. This is a core aspect of Steven Reiss's "Honor" desire and relates directly to the cultural universals of "Moral sentiments" and the ability to "Distinguish right and wrong, good and bad". This tendency motivates individuals to do their duty and take pride in their ethnic heritage, standing in contrast to behaviors driven purely by expediency or opportunism. This indicates that humans possess an intrinsic drive for ethical conduct and loyalty that extends beyond immediate self-interest or external rewards. It suggests a capacity for self-regulation based on internalized principles. This implies that honor and integrity are fundamental to the establishment and maintenance of trust and social cohesion within groups. Societies that cultivate these tendencies may exhibit greater stability and cooperation, whereas their erosion could lead to widespread distrust and social fragmentation. It also suggests that moral reasoning is not solely a learned behavior but is rooted in a fundamental human inclination.
11. **Idealism & Social Justice:** The desire for social justice, equity, and fairness, motivating individuals to advocate for causes, address societal wrongs, and support collective well-being. This is captured by Steven Reiss's "Idealism" desire and is related to cultural universals such as "Law: rights and obligations" and "Redress of wrongs, sanctions". This tendency drives involvement in social causes, attention to current events, and support for charities, reflecting a concern for the broader human condition. This suggests that beyond individual self-interest, humans possess a fundamental capacity for empathy and a drive to rectify perceived injustices within their social

structures. This tendency contributes to the establishment and maintenance of societal norms and order. This implies that societies are not solely built on individual competition but also on a collective drive for fairness and equity. The presence of this tendency means that appeals to justice and moral principles can be powerful motivators for social change and collective action, providing a basis for legal systems and human rights movements.

12. **Order & Structure:** The desire for organization, planning, stability, and predictability, motivating individuals to create and maintain structured environments and routines. This is explicitly identified as Steven Reiss's "Order" desire. This tendency manifests in behaviors like planning, scheduling, and organizing , reflecting a deep-seated need for clarity and control in one's surroundings. This tendency suggests that humans have an inherent drive to reduce uncertainty and increase predictability in their environment. This is a crucial cognitive and behavioral adaptive strategy, allowing for efficient resource allocation and problem-solving. This implies that environments lacking sufficient order or structure can lead to cognitive overload, stress, and reduced effectiveness. It suggests that the human brain actively seeks patterns and predictability, which can also contribute to cognitive biases like "anchoring" , where initial information provides a "reference point" for subsequent data, or "confirmation bias" , where individuals seek information that confirms pre-existing ideas, reinforcing a perceived order.
13. **Physical Activity:** The intrinsic desire for muscle exercise, physical movement, and engagement in vigorous activities and sports. This is identified as Steven Reiss's "Physical Activity" desire. This tendency motivates participation in sports and exercise, driven by an inherent enjoyment of movement itself. The intrinsic nature of this desire, even in modern sedentary environments, suggests it is a deep-seated evolutionary adaptation from a past where physical movement was essential for survival, such as hunting, gathering, and fleeing. This implies that modern lifestyles, which often neglect this fundamental tendency, can lead to widespread health and psychological issues. It suggests that integrating physical activity is not just about health benefits but about fulfilling a core human drive that, if unmet, can lead to a sense of unease or dissatisfaction, even if consciously unrecognized.

14. **Physiological Sustenance:** The fundamental need for basic biological requirements such as food, water, air, and shelter, essential for survival and maintaining bodily homeostasis. This constitutes the lowest and most basic level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, categorized as "Physiological needs". Steven Reiss's "Eating" desire is a specific manifestation of this broader need. Drive-Reduction Theory also focuses on motivations to overcome deficiencies like hunger. These are classified as "deficiency needs" that intensify when unmet, strongly driving motivation to satisfy them. Maslow's hierarchy establishes that these needs must be sufficiently met before individuals can address higher-level needs. This establishes a clear hierarchy of urgency and a causal relationship: unmet physiological needs can override all other motivations, demonstrating their "prepotency". Chronic hunger, for example, makes learning or self-actualization difficult. This implies that societal and individual well-being are fundamentally dependent on ensuring basic physiological needs are met. Policies or conditions that fail to provide adequate food, water, or shelter will inevitably lead to widespread suffering and an inability for individuals to pursue higher-order goals, thus hindering societal progress and stability.
15. **Power & Influence:** The desire to influence others, to achieve, and to exert one's will, often leading to leadership roles, determination, and a drive for accomplishment. This tendency aligns with Josh Kaufman's "Drive to Acquire," specifically the desire for influence, and is a core aspect of Steven Reiss's "Power" desire. It is also related to Maslow's "Esteem" needs, which include the need for respect and confidence. This drive motivates hard work and determination and is leveraged by businesses promising to make people powerful or influential. This tendency is a fundamental engine for leadership and societal organization, as it drives individuals to take initiative, innovate, and direct collective efforts. However, if left unchecked, it can also lead to negative outcomes such as the formation of de facto oligarchies, where rule is concentrated in the hands of a small group. This suggests that while the drive for power is inherent and can be a force for progress, its societal manifestation requires careful structuring and ethical frameworks to prevent abuse and ensure it serves collective rather than purely selfish interests. It highlights the constant tension between individual ambition and communal well-being.

16. **Reproduction & Sexuality:** The desire for sex, beauty, and the continuation of the species, encompassing mating preferences, sexual jealousy, and the establishment of reproductive partnerships. This is captured by Steven Reiss's "Romance" desire, specifically its sexual aspect. Evolutionary psychology highlights sex-specific mating preferences and incest-avoidance mechanisms as evolved adaptations. Cultural universals further reinforce this tendency, including "Marriage," the norm of "Copulation normally conducted in privacy," "Incest prevention or avoidance," and "Sexual jealousy". This tendency motivates concern for physical appearance and the pursuit of potential partners. It is deeply rooted in evolutionary biology for species propagation. This demonstrates that while the underlying biological drive for reproduction is universal, its behavioral and social manifestations are heavily shaped by cultural norms and evolutionary adaptations. For instance, sexual jealousy is widely observed, but its expression and societal handling vary across cultures. This implies that understanding human sexuality requires integrating biological predispositions with cultural expressions. It highlights the complex interplay between innate drives and societal rules in shaping one of the most fundamental human tendencies, and how cultural universals often arise from these underlying biological imperatives.
17. **Ritual & Ceremony:** The universal tendency to engage in formalized, symbolic actions and ceremonies that mark transitions, reinforce social bonds, express beliefs, and imbue life with shared meaning. This is identified as a cultural universal by Donald Brown, encompassing "Rites of passage," "Death rituals, mourning," "Childbirth customs," and "Special speech for special occasions". These practices provide structure and meaning to significant life events and collective experiences. The pervasive presence of ritual across all known human cultures suggests a fundamental human need to mark significant events, process complex emotions (e.g., grief), and reinforce collective identities and beliefs. These are not merely arbitrary customs but serve deep psychological and social functions. This implies that rituals are essential for maintaining social order, transmitting cultural values, and providing individuals with a sense of belonging and meaning. Their absence or decline in modern societies might contribute to feelings of anomie or disconnection, as a fundamental human tendency for structured, symbolic collective action goes unmet.

18. **Symbolism & Meaning-Making:** The innate capacity and drive to create, interpret, and use symbols, metaphors, and narratives to understand the world, communicate complex ideas, and imbue experiences with deeper significance. This is identified as a cultural universal by Donald Brown, including "Figurative speech, metaphors," "Symbolism, symbolic speech," "Synesthetic metaphors," "Myths, legends," and "Dream interpretation". This tendency is fundamental to language, art, and belief systems. It allows for abstract thought and the transmission of culture across generations. The "narrative fallacy" also highlights a human preference for stories, even when they lead to less desirable outcomes, because stories provide a coherent framework for understanding. This reveals a profound human capacity and inherent drive to create and interpret symbolic representations, which is foundational for abstract thought, complex communication, and the very fabric of culture. Humans do not just process raw data; they seek to organize it into meaningful narratives and symbols. This implies that meaning-making is not a secondary activity but a primary cognitive function. It suggests that humans are inherently storytellers and symbol-users, and that systems (e.g., educational, political, religious) that fail to provide coherent narratives or symbolic frameworks may struggle to resonate or motivate. This tendency also explains the power of art, religion, and ideology in shaping human societies.
19. **Tool Making & Innovation:** The fundamental adaptive drive to create, use, and improve tools and technologies to modify the environment, solve problems, and enhance capabilities. This is identified as a cultural universal by Donald Brown, encompassing "Tools, tool making," "Control of fire," "Cooking," "Weapons," "Containers," "Lever," and "Rope". This tendency is a hallmark of human intelligence and adaptability, leading to cumulative cultural evolution and technological advancement. It is noted that tool making, the use of fire, and cooking food seem to have existed in the "very earliest human populations" and spread with humans to all their subsequent habitats. This highlights that the drive to create and utilize tools is not merely a learned skill but a fundamental adaptive strategy that has been present since the dawn of humanity. It represents a unique human capacity to externalize and augment our physical and cognitive abilities. This implies that technological innovation is an inherent and continuous expression of human nature, rather than a

modern phenomenon. It suggests that the drive to solve problems through invention is a powerful force shaping human history and future, leading to cumulative cultural evolution where each generation builds upon the innovations of the last.

20. **Vengeance & Retribution:** The desire to confront, get even with, or seek punishment against those who frustrate, offend, or cheat, often manifesting as a competitive spirit. This is explicitly identified as Steven Reiss's "Vengeance" desire. Evolutionary game theory and the concept of "hostility toward cheaters" are mentioned in evolutionary psychology as mechanisms that help explain the evolution of altruistic behavior. While seemingly negative, this tendency can be understood within evolutionary frameworks as a mechanism to enforce social norms and deter free-riding, thereby contributing to group cohesion. This suggests that the drive for retribution, while often leading to conflict, also serves a crucial social function: deterring exploitation and enforcing norms of reciprocity within a group. It helps to maintain fairness and trust by punishing those who violate social contracts. This implies that the justice systems and punitive measures found in societies are, in part, formalizations of this fundamental human tendency. It highlights a complex interplay where a seemingly negative individual drive can contribute to collective order and stability by discouraging behaviors that undermine group cooperation.
21. **Cognitive Efficiency & Bias:** The inherent tendency of the human mind to employ mental shortcuts (heuristics) and selective processing, which, while often leading to efficient decision-making, can also result in systematic errors in reasoning, known as cognitive biases. This tendency is derived from the concept of "Cognitive Bias" itself, with examples including Confirmation Bias, Loss Aversion, Anchoring, and Herd Mentality. Cognitive biases are described as "errors in cognition" that influence decision-making and are particularly "prolific in behavioral finance and capital markets". While labeled "errors," these biases represent the brain's inherent tendency towards efficiency and rapid decision-making. In an evolutionary past, where quick judgments were often more critical than perfect rationality, these shortcuts were likely adaptive. This implies that human reasoning is not purely rational but is fundamentally shaped by these ingrained cognitive tendencies. In modern, complex environments, these once-adaptive shortcuts can lead to predictable

and significant errors. Understanding these biases is crucial for improving decision-making in various domains, from personal finance to public policy, by recognizing and mitigating their inherent influence.

22. **Adaptation & Adjustment:** The overarching, meta-tendency to adjust to and utilize the environment for self-construction, survival, and thriving, encompassing the continuous process of learning, changing, and evolving in response to external conditions. This is a core concept in Montessori philosophy, where human tendencies "aid us in understanding and adapting to our environment". Evolutionary psychology also emphasizes "adaptive mechanisms" shaped by natural selection. This tendency is the ultimate purpose behind many other human tendencies, allowing humankind "endless flexibility in adjusting to" various circumstances. This positions adaptation not just as one tendency among many, but as an overarching, fundamental purpose that underlies and integrates all other human tendencies. Exploration, learning, defense, tool-making, and even social bonding ultimately serve the larger goal of successful adaptation and survival. This implies that human nature is fundamentally dynamic and plastic, driven by a continuous imperative to adjust and thrive in changing conditions. It suggests that rigidity or an inability to adapt, whether at an individual or societal level, goes against this core master tendency, potentially leading to stagnation or decline. Understanding this meta-tendency is crucial for navigating complex challenges and fostering resilience in an ever-evolving world.

4. Interconnectedness and Nuance of Human Tendencies

The fundamental human tendencies are not isolated constructs but form a "complex, interrelated system that cannot be broken down into its parts". Their interplay is dynamic and multifaceted, influencing how individuals perceive the world and interact within it. For instance, the drive to acquire might be significantly influenced by the desire for status, as possessions often confer social standing. Similarly, the fundamental need for safety can profoundly impact an individual's capacity to pursue higher-order aspirations like self-actualization.

Maslow's hierarchy provides a conceptual framework for understanding this sequential prioritization, suggesting that basic needs, such as physiological

sustenance and safety, must be sufficiently met before higher-order needs like love, esteem, and self-actualization become prominent motivators. However, this progression is not a rigid, linear path. Individuals can move "up and down Maslow's pyramid" even within the confines of a single day. For example, a student might be focused on learning (a growth need) but an unexpected threat to their safety or an incident with a peer could immediately shift their focus back to more basic needs. This indicates that while some needs might be "prepotent", the prioritization of tendencies is not always fixed or linear. Environmental factors, such as experiencing a crime or going through a divorce, can rapidly alter an individual's motivational focus. This suggests that understanding human motivation requires a dynamic model, acknowledging that external circumstances can profoundly and rapidly shift which tendencies become dominant. It challenges simplistic, static views of human behavior and suggests that interventions in domains like education, therapy, or management must be adaptable to individuals' fluctuating needs and external pressures, rather than assuming a fixed developmental path.

The manifestation of these universal tendencies is also significantly influenced by environment and lived experience. While the underlying drives are inherent, their expression can be "masked or distorted by the weight of our lived experiences". Social environments, for example, play a critical role in shaping the quality of motivation. Environments that are supportive of basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—lead to more autonomous and persistent behavior, contributing to higher overall well-being. Conversely, when these needs are thwarted through social interactions, motivation can become controlled by external pressures, leading to decreased satisfaction and sustained success. Even cognitive biases, while reflecting inherent mental shortcuts, are shaped by how information is presented (framing bias) and by prior experiences (anchoring bias).

This discussion naturally leads to the enduring "nature versus nurture" dynamic. The debate revolves around the degree to which human nature is a consequence of biology versus social influence. Evolutionary psychology emphasizes evolved adaptations and innate psychological mechanisms shaped by natural selection. In contrast, some cultural relativist perspectives may deny the existence of cultural universals, emphasizing the predominant role of nurture and social conditioning. This report acknowledges that fundamental tendencies are innate, representing

the "nature" component. However, their specific expression, their relative prioritization in an individual's life, and the particular means by which they are satisfied are heavily influenced by cultural context, individual learning, and environmental conditions—the "nurture" component. The human condition is thus a complex interplay where universal predispositions interact with the unique tapestry of individual and societal experiences.

5. Conclusion: Implications for Understanding Human Behavior

The 22 fundamental human tendencies presented in this report—ranging from basic physiological drives to complex cognitive and social motivations—illustrate the multifaceted nature of human behavior. These tendencies are derived from a synthesis of psychological, anthropological, and philosophical insights, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the core impelling forces that shape human perception, action, and adaptation.

The implications of these fundamental tendencies are far-reaching across various domains of human life:

- **Education:** A deep understanding of tendencies such as Curiosity, Competence, Autonomy, and Exploration is crucial for designing effective learning environments. Educational approaches that recognize and foster these intrinsic drives are more likely to cultivate genuine interest, sustained motivation, and holistic development in learners.
- **Business and Economics:** Drives like Acquisition, Power, and the "Drive to Feel" are foundational to market dynamics, consumer behavior, and leadership strategies. Businesses that effectively connect with multiple core human drives are more attractive to their potential markets. Furthermore, understanding cognitive biases is critical for behavioral economics, enabling more accurate predictions of market irrationalities and the design of more effective economic policies.
- **Personal Development and Well-being:** Recognizing and addressing fundamental needs for Affiliation, Autonomy, and Tranquility can guide individuals in pursuing personal fulfillment and maintaining mental health. Self-

awareness of one's dominant desires, as suggested by Reiss's work, can lead to greater self-understanding and more aligned life choices.

- **Sociology and Public Policy:** Universal patterns related to Family, Justice, Ritual, and Tool Making provide essential insights for the design of social structures, legal systems, and community initiatives. Policies that align with these deep-seated tendencies are more likely to be accepted and effective, fostering social cohesion and collective well-being.

The exploration of these fundamental human tendencies reveals a species driven by a complex interplay of innate forces, constantly adapting and seeking meaning within an ever-changing world. While universal in their essence, their diverse manifestations underscore the richness and adaptability of the human condition, offering a profound lens through which to comprehend the motivations underlying human endeavors across history and cultures.