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Introduction of 38th Session of the Nebraska Symposium on Motivation

Richard A. Dienstbier

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, rdienstbier2@unl.edu

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Introduction

Richard A. Dienstbier

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

This 38th session of the Nebraska Symposium on Motivation coincided with the 100th anniversary of the teaching of psychology at the University of Nebraska (1889) and with the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Department of Psychology (1939). The originator of early psychological instruction here, and the person to whom all recent volumes of this Symposium have been dedicated, is Harry K. Wolfe, one of Wilhelm Wundt's first two American students. In part because of the significance of these anniversaries, and because of the identification of this Symposium with psychology at the University of Nebraska, the Symposium Committee and I decided to devote this volume entirely to the topic of motivation. As this Symposium developed, however, we became convinced that we should undertake a more permanent change in focus toward motivation.

Beginning with the second Nebraska Symposium in 1953 and continuing for a decade, these volumes were singularly devoted to the topic of motivation. However, reflecting a concern within the field of psychology that the concept of motivation was no longer particularly useful, the Symposia and resulting annual volumes focused on diverse topics, with a tradition begun in the early 1970s that each volume would be devoted to a single topic. Each year we noted that ours was a series on "current theory and research in motiva-

tion," but the change to topics other than motivation was reflected in the use of appropriate subtitles, beginning with the 1975 volume's *Conceptual Foundations of Psychology*. (See Benjamin and Jones, 1979, for a description of the first 25 years of the Symposium.)

With this 1990 Symposium and continuing in the volumes from 1992 onward, we shall confront motivation directly. This effort to "return to our roots" reflects more than a historical concern or an effort to be more true to our title. Instead, along with the contributors to this volume, the Symposium Committee and I see a resurgence in the use of motivational concepts in diverse areas within psychology.

The reliance of psychology graduate programs in the 1950s on volumes of this series for information on motivation was replaced in the 1960s by reliance on *Motivation: Theory and Research* by Charles Cofer and Mortimer H. Appley (Benjamin & Jones, 1979). As the founding editor (in 1977) of the journal *Motivation and Emotion*, Mortimer Appley played a role in the recent resurgence of interest in motivation and was the obvious choice for a scholar to reflect upon the history and possible future of this topic.

For Appley, the fundamental motivational process is equilibration—seeking for equilibrium or homeostasis. But the term and the approach are often misunderstood, with the assumption made that such approaches cannot account for creativity, growth, or the seeking of stimulation and high arousal levels. Appley's equilibration process functions both to maintain balance and to allow responsiveness to the environment. These processes are arranged in complex hierarchies, so that the outcome of one homeostatic process may be the input for the next. Appley's description of hierarchical integration of homeostatic processes at various levels fits well with the "onionlike" character of neocortical layers discussed by Derryberry and Tucker in this volume. Appley sees cognitive processes as subsystems of the "larger motivational dynamic," with motivation often stimulated by discrepancies between the current situation and some comparison memory or standard. For example, discrepancies between entities such as the self schema and an idealized self-image are directly motivating. Appley concludes that human motivation cannot be understood without reference to the self-concept. His concerns with how the self-concept influences motivational patterns could serve as an introduction to Carol S. Dweck's chapter, which begins with a similar orientation.

Like Appley, Douglas Derryberry and Don M. Tucker present a broad and fundamental model of motivation. They approach motivation through the evolution and neural architecture of the human brain. For readers with minimal physiological knowledge, this is a challenging chapter, for it is thorough and rich in descriptions of brain structure. However, the chapter evolves toward motivational issues considered at levels and in terms similar to those in the other chapters. Derryberry and Tucker emphasize the vertical dimension of neocortical organization, noting that from more ancient and basic brain structures through the many layers of the neocortex, neural networks describe a bottom-up, fan out pattern of organization, particularly relevant to effector function, while a top-down, fan in pattern is associated with sensory and perceptual organization. They suggest that psychological approaches to motivation should be consistent with those underlying neurological patterns, particularly the bottom-up networks from brainstem and limbic areas, noting that the lower centers exert the most general motivational control; articulation of goals and means may be achieved at higher levels. Derryberry and Tucker note that the different neural “modulators” (emphasizing noradrenaline and dopamine) influence attention and personality by biasing the sensitivity of different neural systems. Noradrenaline pathways show responsivity to novelty, fast time courses, phasic alertness in the context of novel or stressful events, and right hemispheric cognitive activity; dopaminergic paths are associated with motor pattern perseveration, a slower time course, tonic arousal, anxiety, and left hemispheric function. These functional relationships provide a neurological basis for such diverse features as Osgood’s basic dimensions of meaning, Watson’s two-factor mood dimensions, and Thayer’s dual systems of arousal. Relevant to Dweck’s concerns with how goals and implicit personality theories modulate the impact of failure experiences, the work of Derryberry and Tucker provides a possible neurological basis for understanding how successes and failures bias subsequent perceptual and cognitive processes.

In her chapter, Carol S. Dweck approaches personality development through motivational concepts—especially goals that are relevant to self-concept. The initial sections of the chapter depend upon her work with school-age children identified as “mastery oriented” or as “helpless” based on their response to failure. Helpless children

attribute failure to a lack of ability and tend to remember more failures than successes in all circumstances, whereas mastery children are likely to try harder and to organize their efforts more systematically, seeing failures as minor setbacks on the way to continued development. Dweck conceptualized these two types of children as having different goals and even different theories of skills and of intelligence (as fixed entities versus as being incremental with practice and learning). Noting that younger children are usually characterized as resilient in failure contexts, Dweck and her colleagues undertook studies of preschoolers and found that young children could be characterized according to their persistence in the face of failure. Those who persisted in accepting new challenges after setbacks saw their performance in more positive ways and resisted labeling themselves "bad" after minor failures in their real or fantasy performances. Those who did not persist saw even minor imperfections in their performance as diminishing their self-worth. Dweck discusses how developmental processes affect these attributional tendencies and the implications of these dispositions for other aspects of behavior and personality.

Bernard Weiner's attribution-based understanding of motivation (internal vs. external locus of causality, stability, and controllability of causes) has been broadly influential. In his chapter, Weiner discusses the importance of the perceived controllability of the causes of one's situation and of solutions to one's problems. He focuses on affective reactions and the actions motivated by affective responses. Responsibility judgments are a fundamental category of attribution, activated in a variety of contexts and unifying the areas of helping, reactions to stigmas, appraisals of achievement, and excuse giving. For example, when negative states obtain, the perceived controllability of the causes determines whether pity or anger is directed toward the victim. Stigmatized states for which personal responsibility is not attributed to the actor lead to pity, helping, and liking, whereas the attribution of personal responsibility (blame) for negative states leads to anger, disliking, and less helping. Therefore, in offering excuses for bad outcomes, one minimizes one's own level of responsibility to dispose potential helpers toward pity, liking, and helping rather than toward anger. For a variety of afflictions Weiner discusses the reactions of individuals and funding agencies to different attributions of responsibility for causes and "cures."

Albert Bandura approaches motivation through the concept of self-efficacy. He suggests that both attributional approaches to motivation and traditional expectancy-value theories can be subsumed by self-efficacy. Thus, where motivation seems affected by attributions, those impacts are due to the effects of the attributions on one's feeling of self-efficacy (not one's actual ability). Feelings of self-efficacy in turn affect attributions. Similarly, expectancy-value based predictions of motivation account for a minor component of variance beyond that accounted for by self-efficacy, since feelings of self-efficacy largely subsume expectations that one will be able to achieve the desired goal. Bandura offers a goal-oriented approach to motivation through theory and research on long- or short-term goals and on the relation of goal attainment to intrinsic interest and one's sense of self-efficacy. Concerning the issue central to Dweck's chapter, of skills perceived to be fixed entities (rather than acquirable), Bandura examines the effect of those orientations on managerial efficiency. Interrelations of mood and emotional states on goal attainment and self-efficacy are discussed, as is the relation of self-efficacy and behavioral and cognitive control to anxiety. Anxiety and avoidant behavior are seen as coeffects of low self-efficacy rather than as effects of each other. Reminiscent of Dweck's concern with children's experience of themselves as good or bad after failure, Bandura sees parallels between areas of achievement and social motivation on the one hand and morality on the other, with both dependent upon internalized standards that are relatively consistent within the individual. The latter part of his chapter explicates that moral connection.

Growth and continued development are central motivational forces in the system presented by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan. Also emphasized are the three primary psychological needs for competence, autonomy or self-determination, and relatedness to others. Deci and Ryan explicate the dimension of internal versus external motivation. This is not the often-cited "locus of control" concept, but rather constitutes a focus on the perceived source of the motivation for action. Behaviors are described as self-determined (internal), controlled (experienced as coerced by internalized rules or standards or by external forces, but not experienced as freely chosen), or amotivated. Thus, in controlled behavior one may have a sense of being able to control the outcome and a sense that one has

initiated the behavior, but not a sense of being able to freely chose whether to perform the behavior. Such a behavior would be seen as internal through the perspective of locus of control theory, but it is not internal in Deci and Ryan's system. The concept relates somewhat to Weiner's concern with responsibility for cause versus responsibility for outcome or solution and to Bandura's self-efficacy. But whereas Bandura might focus on an enhanced sense of self-efficacy after the successful completion of behavior, Deci and Ryan note that one may still experience oneself as being a pawn, without freedom of choice. In Deci and Ryan's system, intrinsic motivation is experienced as truly self-determined (what one wants to do, with a sense of freedom of choice, not controlled even by internalized rules that one experiences as coercive). The authors relate this dimension to issues of emotion, ego involvement (antithetical to intrinsic motivation, as are all forces experienced as controlling), and their view of self-concept. The processes of self are seen as motivational rather than cognitive, with the core concept being growth motivation. In their descriptions of individuals motivated to seek challenge and growth, in contrast to feeling defensive in response to a sense that controlling forces are motivating them (antithetical to self-determination), one easily sees similarities to the persistent challenge-seeking children of Dweck's research.

The authors of these chapters do not uniformly confront motivational issues at the same levels of analysis, nor, when they do, are they in agreement on all points. They were invited because each had a powerful and unique approach to motivation, and they have uniformly fulfilled that promise in these chapters. I give them my heartfelt thanks for their conscientiousness at all points in this process and for these excellent chapters. Reviewing them in preparation for this brief introduction has strengthened my belief that the time has indeed come to focus this Symposium more consistently on the topic of motivation.

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