

Intrinsic Motivation in 4-H

Leaders should not overlook the fact that young people
are capable of intrinsically "rewarding themselves"
as they do certain activities

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MOTIVATION and the use of incentives are universal problems of large organizations. Such problems have been widely studied in industrial organizations, starting back in the 1930's with some now classic studies on worker morale. Extension is increasingly aware of and concerned about these very problems—especially in relation to 4-H Club work. Many people feel that the use of material incentives is getting out of hand and are frustrated at not being able to describe just what part they should play in the scheme of things or to find alternatives to current "recognition" programs.

Recent developments in the psychology of motivation may have a bearing on these problems. The research concerns "internal" more than external incentives. The basic concepts are derived from a *need psychology* which says that we humans have certain internal needs which tend, when activated, to determine our behavior. Studies have given clues for identifying people with certain needs and have told us how to activate certain needs.

A need, motivation, and an incentive are not the same, but they do work together to affect human behavior. A *need* is usually thought to be present when something we desire or aspire to is lacking. But that something has to be aroused if a need is to stimulate action. The stimulation to action is referred to as *motivation*. The arousal may result from some situation—be inherent in it—or from some other person having identified a goal, a preferred behavior, or an outcome of action. Such goals, behaviors, or outcomes may be

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inherent in an activity or undertaking or be external to it (i.e., an increased monetary or material award for reaching some standard of perfection). We refer to the object of the arousal as an incentive, whether inherent in or external to an action.

What kinds of awards or rewards can people experience when engaged in satisfying a need? One type, called *extrinsic*, refers essentially to material rewards.¹ These generally come at the end of a performance and are presented to the performer for a job well done. They do not follow directly out of one's performance (are not inherent in it), but rather are an addition to the performance usually coming at the end (i.e., a trophy presented to the winner of a race). The term recognition, as it is used in 4-H, generally refers to extrinsic rewards such as the giving of a certificate, a ribbon, a dinner, a trip, a scholarship, and so on.

The other kind of reward is called *intrinsic*. No one can give us intrinsic awards. We experience these privately while engaging in an activity. People undertake all kinds of ventures—from mountain climbing to serving on a PTA committee—not because they expect some kind of extrinsic, material reward, but simply because they get some personal "kick" from doing the activity. We find intrinsic rewards in the breathless excitement of pursuit and exploration, in the surprise of discovery, in the tugs and teasing of curiosity, in the stability and sense of purpose that come with being involved, and in the boost in self-esteem that one feels when he is competent. It is, of course, the capacity for these intrinsic or inner gratifications that is so important in the development of enduring interests and dedications. However, it should be pointed out that even though extrinsic rewards are external to a performance, they may serve the purpose of assuring the performer that, in the judgment of others, pride in his accomplishment is justifiable.

People vary in their capacity to experience extrinsic or intrinsic rewards. Certainly both types are present in most human situations. We all need the extrinsic rewards—the paycheck, the grade, the occasional public recognition of our worth. But it is also good to be able to experience intrinsic gratifications which give us the fuel to persevere at a job when the end and the material rewards are not in sight.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to explore this area of intrinsic motivation or rewards—not because it is the only important need of need satisfaction, but because it is so often neglected and little understood. Because intrinsic rewards are private and intangi-

¹ Solomon E. Asch, *Social Psychology* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1952), chap-

ble, people sometimes don't even have the words and labels by which to get a "handle" on these unseen realities. One can see and touch a ribbon or a certificate, and know pretty well the effect it will have on a child. The giving of extrinsic rewards is generally a public event which is governed by regulations or specified procedures. But how does a leader go about activating the needs that bring intrinsic satisfaction, so important in the development of the child? How can he utilize extrinsic awards to cultivate intrinsic motivations? Certainly he cannot teach these to a child; the capacity for experiencing certain intrinsic satisfactions has probably developed or failed to develop long before the child comes to 4-H. However, the leader can help the child to cultivate the motivation he has. The leader should know what motivations are important to the child and how to behave to elicit and maximize these motivations.

ACHIEVEMENT AND AFFILIATION NEEDS

One way to talk about intrinsic rewards is in terms of the kind of needs that motivate people. Two psychologists, McClelland² and Atkinson³ have developed these ideas about people with certain needs and how the needs can be activated. They did most of their studies in university settings with college students as subjects. In view of the latter, these ideas are presented to Extension and 4-H workers more in the spirit of "trying them out" rather than as final solutions to motivational problems.

McClelland and Atkinson did most of their research on two principal needs—achievement and affiliation. Need *achievement* refers to the desire to excel, to be successful, to compete, and to win. It also implies that the person enjoys the very exercise of a skill, the demonstration of competence, or the test of strength. He enjoys the very running of the race, as well as the prize that comes with winning. Need *affiliation* refers to the desire to have close, warm relationships with other people, to be a part of the group, to belong, to help others, and to be helped by them.

How can the strength of a need in a particular person be measured? This was solved by employing a well-established psychological principle which states that needs and feelings play a great role in determining how a person will perceive and interpret a situation. Every 4-Her, every parent and volunteer leader, and every

²David McClelland, *et al.*, *The Achievement Motive* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953).

³John W. Atkinson (ed.), *Motives in Fantasy, Action, and Society* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1958).

Extension worker has his own little "private world" in which he sees and interprets everything. Accordingly, participators in research studies (subjects) were shown pictures of people in ambiguous situations (situations that could easily be interpreted in a number of ways). They were then asked to write stories about these pictures. It was assumed that their individual needs would influence their interpretation of the pictures. If one were attempting to measure the achievement need, the number of achievement references and themes in the stories might serve as an index of the strength of the need. Stories that received a high achievement score might contain statements that somebody is striving for a goal, that he wants to be successful, that he is competing with a standard of excellence that he sets for himself or that other people set for him, that he is trying to accomplish something unique such as an invention or artistic creation, that he is involved in long term work such as a professional or business career, and so on.⁴

When participators who had high achievement scores were compared with those who had low scores, the high scorers did tend to achieve more. In doing certain tasks they worked faster, produced more, and even showed more learning.⁵ Various aspects of their psychological functioning seemed to be oriented toward achievement goals. For example, their perception was more sensitive to images and symbols of achievement. When words were flashed on a screen for a very brief period of time, the achievers could see much better the words related to success, winning, and so on.⁶ The achievers were more realistic in setting goals for themselves;⁷ their thinking was future-directed and geared to overcoming obstacles rather than avoiding them.⁸

In much the same way participators who had strong affiliation needs were identified. Stories about establishing, maintaining, or restoring a positive relationship with another person seemed to indicate a strong affiliative need in the person. These were stories about love, friendships, parties, reunions, visits, helping, consoling, being lonely when separated from somebody, and so on.⁹ Subjects who wrote such stories showed strong affiliation needs when their beha-

⁴McClelland, *op. cit.*, chapters iii, iv, v.

⁵*Ibid.*, chapter viii.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷John W. Atkinson, *et al.*, "The Achievement Motive, Goal Setting, and Personality Preferences," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, LX (January, 1960), 27-36.

⁸McClelland, *op. cit.*, chapter viii.

⁹John W. Atkinson, Roger W. Heyns, and Joseph Veroff, "The Effect of Experimental Arousal of the Affiliation Motive on Thematic Apperception," in *McClelland (ed.)*, *op. cit.*

behavior was measured in other areas. For example, such subjects were judged by their social groups as being more friendly and popular and as having traits that were socially desirable.¹⁰

Classifying Needs

Having made this distinction, we hasten to point out its limitations. First of all, we can not type all people as being either achievers or affiliators. We are talking about a way of classifying needs—not people. People can and do have many, often conflicting needs. It should go without saying that achievers no doubt enjoy being with people and that they are capable of being cooperative and sociable. Similarly, people with strong affiliation needs no doubt are capable of getting things done, or getting good grades, or finishing college. The point of this distinction is that if a person has certain strong needs, his feelings and pleasurable experiences crystallize around certain activities. These are the things that *move* him. It does not mean that he is incapable of other kinds of behavior, but that in the area of his needs you will find the dynamic and striving part of him, not the static and habit part.

Likewise, needs may vary from situation to situation. The achievers identified in this research are primarily academic achievers. The experimenters could not say whether they would achieve in other areas, e.g., sports or politics. In the school situation, however, their behavior was consistently achievement oriented.

These studies offer a number of hints for identifying the person with a strong achievement or a strong affiliation need. While the psychologists made their conclusions from only written stories, it seems that 4-H leaders would be in a favorable position for “measuring” needs in that they can observe a child’s behavior in a number of situations. Judgments about the strength of these needs could be made from observing how a child likes to spend his time, what he likes to talk about, what he looks forward to, what excites him, what makes him sad or disappointed, etc.

INTRINSIC REWARDS

At this point one might ask what kinds of intrinsic rewards are offered by 4-H. Although one can analyze the written productions of individuals and arrive at a measure of what is important to them, can the same be done with a group like 4-H? The answer seems to be yes. Groups produce public statements and documents which may reflect their strivings in much the same way that the subjects in

¹⁰ Thomas E. Shipley, Jr. and Joseph Veroff, “A Projective Measure of Need for Affiliation,” in Atkinson (ed.), *op. cit.*

these studies reflected their strivings in the stories they wrote. McClelland made such an analysis of the classic Greek civilization.¹¹ He found that the achievement scores derived from Greek literature of certain periods correlated well with actual achievement as measured, for example, by the amount of trade done in that particular period.

Without doing violence to the complexity and variability of the 4-H organization, it might be possible to make a similar analysis of its public statements and documents. A superficial survey of 4-H brochures, programs, and activities suggests that its important values probably crystallize around achievement and affiliation. (In fact this is one reason this paper was undertaken; the recent motivation studies appeared to be very relevant to the 4-H situation.) The importance of achievement values to 4-H is seen in the great emphasis on contests, exhibits, the competitive nature of projects, and of course, in the motto, "To make the best better." Likewise, affiliation rewards are the core of such common 4-H activities as working together in community projects, singing together, devotions, camps, conferences, etc. In the 4-H pledge affiliative values are reflected in the pledging of the "heart to greater loyalty" and the "hands to larger service."

Conditions that Activate Needs

What kind of situation arouses each need? It seems that each need has to be stimulated in a certain way, otherwise, it is not operating (e.g., the achievers do not always work the hardest and produce the most).

In general, it was found that achievers performed best when they were under pressure in a competitive situation.¹² Such a condition was created experimentally by having a formal, businesslike experimenter inform the subjects that they were participating in important governmental research, and that they were being tested for their capacities of intelligence and leadership. One might conclude, therefore, that the necessary stimulus for the achievement need seems to be to challenge the achiever that he is being compared with others and evaluated.

Subjects with affiliation needs performed best under just the opposite conditions (when the social atmosphere was relaxed and easy-going).¹³ For example, in these studies the experimenter was

¹¹David C. McClelland, "The Use of Measures of Human Motivation in the Study of Society," in Atkinson (ed.), *op. cit.*

¹²McClelland, *op. cit.*, chapter iii.

¹³Elizabeth G. French, "Some Characteristics of Achievement Motivation," in Atkinson (ed.), *op. cit.*

very informal, he joked around a bit before starting the study, he told the subjects that the research they were participating in was new and so probably not very important. He conveyed to the subjects that he needed and was asking for their cooperation. The affiliative subjects seemed to be particularly moved by this last request—being asked to do something as a way of helping someone. In such a situation they outproduced the achievers who seem to be left cold in such an atmosphere.

Such findings highlight the importance of treating differently the arousal of each need. People with strong achievement motives seem to need a challenge to bring out the best in them; the people with affiliation needs have to feel at ease with and like a person before they try to meet his demands. The importance of these needs and principles is demonstrated by the fact that they seem to be operating even in the college classroom where intelligence has been thought to be the sole factor in successful performance. A recent study¹⁴ has shown that students with affiliation needs made better grades when the instructor was friendly and informal, when he took a personal interest in students, called them by name, encouraged class discussion as opposed to formal lecturing, and so on. Students with achievement needs, on the other hand, tended to do better when instructor and classroom conditions were more formal.

INTRINSIC VS. EXTRINSIC REWARDS

This paper began with the concern of some Extension workers that too great a use is made of extrinsic rewards in 4-H. Our answer to this problem has essentially been that greater emphasis might be placed on intrinsic rewards. For example, we would ask, "Are those responsible for the program sufficiently aware of the opportunities for intrinsic rewards?" The purpose of this paper is to point to different needs in youth, and to give some clues for identifying and activating different needs.

There is no simple solution to the above problem which, of course, has many ramifications. One of the more important aspects of this problem is the possible adverse effect that exclusive use of extrinsic rewards may have on the development of intrinsic motivations—especially when the real merits and potentialities of the extrinsic rewards are not understood by professional and lay people who use them. For example, we have heard such questions from 4-H administrators: "Is our recognition program having an adverse

¹⁴W. J. McKeachie, "Motivation, Teaching Methods, and College Learning," in Marshall R. Jones (ed.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, 1961* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961).

effect on the members who do not get the awards?" and "Does our program tend to involve members (and their parents) in a highly competitive 'rat race' for the awards?" Or, in terms of the needs discussed in this paper, one might wonder if prizes or material rewards really aid the development of intrinsic satisfactions of the affiliative type.

As yet there seems to be little or no research work on the interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. At a commonsense level one would think that extrinsic rewards would naturally aid the development of intrinsic motivation. But there is some evidence to indicate that the relationship between these two variables may not be so simple and straightforward.

In one study where subjects were paid for good performance, it was found that the greatest effect of such extrinsic rewards was on subjects with low achievement needs.¹⁵ Such a monetary prize did not greatly increase the motivation of subjects who already showed a lot of striving. However, subjects with low achievement needs seemed to have mercenary kinds of motives, i.e., they worked hard if a material incentive was available, but if no reward was offered their production dropped markedly. The experimenters noted that giving money to the achievers seemed to take the zest out of their performance.

This is understandable to some extent. People sometimes refuse pay for a good deed simply because the pay would rob them of the good feelings they got from doing the deed. One educator suggests that extrinsic rewards may actually have the effect of breaking down intrinsic motivation.¹⁶ For example, the giving of extrinsic rewards, because it is a public event, open to the child's family and friends, may force the child to work primarily for these rewards—else he would lose social status with family and friends. This kind of pressure may really prevent the child from developing the leisurely, exploratory, curious, playful interests that are the basis for intrinsic satisfactions.

We raise these questions only to point out the complexity of this problem of rewards and incentive—problems which only research will eventually resolve. Until more definite answers come, leaders should keep an open mind on these issues, exercise considerable judgment tempered with caution, and not be at all hesitant to try out new ideas and approaches.

¹⁵W. Atkinson, "Towards Experimental Analysis of Human Motivation in Terms of Motives, Expectancies, and Incentives," in Atkinson (ed.), *op. cit.*; see French, *op. cit.*

¹⁶McKenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

SUMMARY

Although recognition in 4-H generally takes the form of extrinsic, material rewards, leaders should not overlook the fact that children are capable of intrinsically "rewarding themselves" as they enjoy the *doing* of certain activities. Intrinsic rewards can be discussed in terms of achievement and affiliation which appear to be especially important values for 4-H. Research indicates that these two needs are valid and reliable dimensions of personality and useful in predicting behavior. More significantly it indicates that individuals who are strong in either need have to be treated differently to bring out the best in them. Subjects with strong achievement needs seem to flourish in competition and when they are being challenged and evaluated. Individuals with strong affiliative needs perform best in friendly, informal, helping situations. By emphasizing intrinsic rewards leaders might overcome some of the limitations and drawbacks of extrinsic ones.

THE UNITED voice of millions cannot lend the smallest foundation to falsehood.—OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

ON THE WHOLE, it is patience which makes the final difference between those who succeed or fail in all things. All the greatest people have it in an infinite degree, and among the less, the patient weak ones always conquer the impatient strong.

—JOHN RUSKIN.

THERE ARE two ways of meeting difficulties: you alter the difficulties, or you alter yourself to meet them.—PHYLLIS BOTTOME.

DON'T BE AFRAID to take a big step if one is indicated. You can't cross a chasm in two small jumps. —DAVID LLOYD GEORGE.

A PRINCIPLE of policy once established, be it sound or unsound, is almost sure, through evolution, to exert an influence far beyond that created at the time of its original inception.

—ALFRED P. SLOAN, JR.

HE WHO, by an exertion of mind or body, adds to the aggregate of enjoyable wealth, increases the sum of human knowledge, or gives to human life higher elevation or greater fullness—he is, in the larger meaning of the words, a "producer," a "working man," a "laborer," and is honestly earning honest wages.

—from HENRY GEORGE as quoted in *Forbes*, XCIII (February 1, 1964), 50.