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Motivation as a natural linchpin between person and situation

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From the very beginning, motivational theories of personality have emphasized the inseparability of persons and situations for the prediction of behavior. Murray (1938) considered behavior to be the result of a match between a person's motivational *need* and a *press*, that is, a suitable incentive present in the environment that arouses the need and provides an opportunity for its expression. Building on Murray's work, McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell (1953) later used situational arousal of the need for achievement (nAch) to devise a picture-story-based content-coding measure to determine people's dispositional need to excel at challenging tasks. Even this new measure of nAch was not considered to predict behavior across all contexts; rather, McClelland et al. made the presence of suitable incentives and situational contexts a cornerstone of their theory of motivation. Indeed, the picture-story measures developed for the assessment of motives are themselves critically dependent on the inclusion of proper pictorial cues to elicit the motive of interest (e.g., Pang & Schultheiss, 2005) and appear to assess stable patterns of if-then contingencies between situational cues and behavioral responses (Schultheiss, Liening, & Schad, 2008). As a result of the inherent relationship between motivational needs and incentives, the joint consideration of individuals' motives and situational cues is part and parcel of theorizing and research in the field of implicit motive research to this day (e.g., McClelland, 1987; Schultheiss, 2008; Woike, 2008).

But motivational concepts do not only provide a natural linchpin between the person and the situation in the prediction of behavior, they also add a dynamic component to the relationship between both that is absent in classic trait theories of personality. Incentive attainment has a temporary damping effect on the motivational need: after a full meal, even a previously hungry person ceases to think of food and starts thinking of other things. In their dynamics of action theory, Atkinson and Birch (1970) presented a model that formally incorporated such dynamic effects of incentive consummation and need satisfaction on subsequent behavior. Dynamics of action theory thus presaged modern biopsychological and neuroscience accounts of motivation that highlight the changing reward value of incentives. For instance, Cabanac (1971) demonstrated that the same stimulus (e.g., immersion in warm water) can be experienced as pleasant or unpleasant, depending on the need state of the organism (e.g., whether it is in a state of hypo- or hyperthermia). He termed this effect *alliesthesia*, that is, a need-dependent change in the hedonic value of an incentive. Alliesthesia effects have been observed for several domains of motivation, including sexual motivation and feeding behavior. As a case in point, Rolls, Sienkiewicz, and Yaxley (1989) showed that monkeys' responses to sweet glucose syrup change from greedy acceptance to nauseous rejection with continuous ingestion and that neurons in the orbitofrontal cortex closely track this change in reward value with their firing rate. We therefore suggest that motivational concepts provide a rich and fruitful framework for extending research on the interplay between persons and situations into exciting new directions.

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