DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 216 602 HE 015 039

AUTHOR Schneider, Benjamin; Zalesny, Mary D.
TITLE Human Needs and Faculty Motivation.
PUB DATE Aug 81
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, NY, March 1982).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Achievement Need; Behavior Theories; *College Environment; *College Faculty; Faculty College Relationship; Faculty Development; Higher Education; Individual Development; Individual Needs; *Job Satisfaction; Need Gratification; *Self Actualization; *Teacher Motivation; Work Environment

ABSTRACT

Need-based theories of work motivation are considered with particular reference to university faculty; it is hypothesized that three different types of people are attracted to the academic setting: (1) those who want to teach, (2) those who want to do research, and (3) those who want to do both. According to need theories, certain fundamental wants and desires over which people have little control are the activators and directors of all human behavior. Academic institutions, through the opportunities they provide, can facilitate or frustrate the gratification of these wants, and by doing so attract, retain, and motivate particular kinds of academic faculty. It is hypothesized that faculty as a group would tend to fit Maslow's higher order need structures and to be more mature in the sense of that word as used by Argyris and McGregor. For most the the need theories, unsatisfied needs are thought to be the activators of behavior. It is suggested that college faculty are probably high on the need for self-actualization, growth, and achievement. As such, they will be attracted to moderately risky settings that offer them the opportunity to be autonomous, to be investigative, to be challenged, and to be successful. It is suggested that faculty who have their needs relatively satisfied are likely to take on a mentoring function while those who are frustrated are more likely to redirect their energies away from students and research. It is proposed that in order to effectively deal with the particular profile of the needs the typical academic may bring to the academic environment, academic institutions must develop and maintain environments that permit gratification for a researcher and teacher by providing a specific combination of attributes. (SW)

# Human Needs and Faculty Motivation

Benjamin Schneider

Mary D. Zalesny

Michigan State University

**Headnote:** Need theories present a deterministic perspective of faculty behavior and the academic settings to which particular faculty or individuals are drawn.



To Appear In: J. L. Bess (Ed.), The Motivation to Teach. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982.

Running head: Human Needs and Faculty Motivation

Prepared August, 1981

Human Needs and Faculty Motivation

ABSTRACT

Certain fundamental wants and desires over which people have little control are the activators and directors of all human behavior according to the need theories. Academic institutions, through the opportunities they provide, can facilitate or frustrate the gratification of these wants, and by doing so attract, retain, and motivate particular kinds of academic faculty.

Author Identification

- Mary D. Zalesny recently received her doctorate from the University of Illinois and is an assistant professor of industrial/organizational psychology at Michigan State University.

- Benjamin Schneider is the John A. Hannah Professor of Organizational Behavior in Management and Psychology at Michigan State University.

# Human Needs and Faculty Motivation

Benjamin Schneider
Mary D. Zalesny

Michigan State University

People enter occupations and careers for many reasons, including their own abilities and interests as well as the characteristics of the environment in which they grow up and develop. It follows that people who enter academic careers in academic settings probably have a particular subset of abilities, interests, and background. Further, it can be assumed that success in those careers requires that particular combination of abilities, interests, and background which fit the requirements of those settings. Our purpose in the present chapter is to explore the fit of academic to academe from the vantage point of need theories.

Our operating hypothesis is that there are three basically different kinds of people who may be attracted to academic settings: those who have a desire to teach, those with a desire to do research, and those with an orientation to both teaching and research. Similarly, academic institutions have preferences for, and try to attract, usually one of these types of people. Clearly, this distinction is a simplistic one; career and occupational decisions in academics, as elsewhere, are complex and, to a degree, uniquely individual processes (Bess, 1978). Furthermore, addressing individual needs and motivations would amount to mere speculation. The strength of need theories lies not in their prediction of specific individual behaviors, but rather in their explanation of the motivating force behind human behavior in general. Our purpose, then, may be better served by abstracting from the specific and addressing the

general needs or preferences that are fulfilled in the academic world. In what follows, the focus will be on an understanding of faculty motivation in colleges and universities, especially those that prefer people who are oriented to teaching and research.

Ideally each person finds the environment they perfectly fit. This can happen when settings are very clear about their goals and the role of individuals in accomplishing those goals. However, the ideal is rarely achieved in academe. On the one hand the academic setting conveys some very explicit requirements to be met for continued membership, including tenure, but on the other hand, the nature of that same setting is to be behaviorally non-directive (no one tells you how to meet those requirements). From this we could conclude that only those people who (a) discover what the requirements of the setting are and (b) match those requirements, will be successful.

We begin with the assumption that people who find this kind of setting personally rewarding are likely to enter it and remain in it. What sort of person is this likely to be? We propose that those attracted to and potentially gratified by the relatively unstructured world of academe would be mature individuals with strong self-actualization/growth/achievement needs, for whom work is as natural as play, and who enjoy a challenge and taking a moderate risk.

There is essentially no direct evidence for our assertion about the kinds of people likely to be successful academics. However, the general literature that does exist on careers suggests that particular kinds of persons can be found in particular kinds of careers and occupations.

An important question, of course, is how those people come to be found in those careers. Schein (1978) has summarized the two major perspectives that can provide an answer to the question: the differentialist perspective and the developmentalist perspective. In the former, occupations are filled by a matching of a particular person with unique abilities, skills, and interests to a particular occupation. The matching process may be as simple as trial and error carried out by the individuals themselves. It may also be as complex as sophisticated career counseling procedures that assess both person and career attributes.

In the developmentalist view, on the other hand, identity and occupational membership are a part of a continuing sequence of development which begins in childhood and ends in retirement. Occupational membership in this conceptualization is the result of long-term consequence of both heredity and early experiences which influence self image and is, to a large extent, inevitable.

For us, people end up in careers that fit the kind of person they have become over time. Thus, our view encompasses both the differentialist and the developmentalist perspectives. Of particular importance, we feel, is the developmentalist's conceptualization of the career "choice" as a natural outcome of identity formation. In contrast, then, to the more rational, cognitive, career choice theories that subscribe to careful calculations by the individual of expectancies and outcomes, the need theory perspective suggests that the career one enters is a natural consequence of earlier developmental stages. In order to understand this natural consequence of development it would be important to know what leads

people to behave in particular ways, i.e., what activates and directs their behavior. Need theories, which are developmental in their perspective, seem to be particularly appropriate as a source of understanding what activates and directs the behavior of faculty.

Need Theories at Work: The Maslow Heritage

Maslow's (1943, 1954) need-oriented conceptualizations of human motivation is in one way the prototypical need theory: it provides a listing of fundamental wants or desires over which the organism has no control. Maslow, however, not only specified some of the conditions which might gratify needs but he presented a developmental hierarchy of prepotency. This means that (a) lower needs on the hierarchy are assumed to be the first ones encountered in the normal course of development and (b) the higher needs in the hierarchy are activated only after the lower ones are gratified. Maslow's perspective was developmental and deterministic; one could move through the hierarchy but if gratification of a need at a particular stage of development was blocked, one was stuck there. Mature adults were to be found at the upper need levels while children and immature adults were at the lower levels. This theory is presented schematically in Figure 1.

— — — — — — — — — —

Insert Figure 1 about here

— — — — — — — — — —

Argyris (1957; 1960) and McGregor (1960), building on Maslow's work, asked the following kind of question: Suppose that many people at work have had their lower level needs gratified, are mature adults, and, therefore, have higher order needs that require gratification in the work-

Figure 1

Maslow's Theory

The Need Hierarchy

self-actualization needs

esteem needs

belongingness (love) needs

safety needs

physiological needs

The Deprivation/Domination Hypothesis:

The stronger the deprivation of a need the more it dominates in terms of importance.

The Gratification/Activation Hypothesis:

The more a need is gratified the less important it is and the more important the next higher need is.

place--what are some consequences for employees and organizations if this is true? That is, if management's philosophy about workers is that they are motivated by lower level needs, have an aversion to work, are unwilling to accept responsibility for their behaviors at work, and therefore must be treated accordingly (i.e., controlled, coerced and directed through tangible rewards and threats), what are the consequences? The answer they provided is that when the demands of organizations are in conflict with the needs of mature individuals, frustration, failure, and conflict often result. Employees react to these organizational disturbances by adapting their behavior accordingly. For example, behaviors such as turnover, apathy, day-dreaming, and creating informal groups emerge. These adaptive behaviors, however, feedback into the formal organization to create increasing control and direction through closer supervision and greater specialization of work.

It was clear in Argyris' and McGregor's writings that not all people are assumed to be creative, intelligent, capable individuals. Unfortunately their (and others') writings have frequently been misrepresented and sometimes been interpreted as suggesting that everyone strives for and is ready for self-actualization.

However, we would hypothesize that faculty as a group would tend to fit Maslow's higher order need structures and to be more mature in the sense of that word as used by Argyris and McGregor. We make this inference based on the nature of the teaching and research environment the academic desires and chooses to enter.

Alderfer (1972) presented a 3-part classification of needs (Existence, Relatedness and Growth or ERG) that made explicit these individual differences

in desires. His theory capitalized on the research generated by Maslow's theory, which had fairly consistently failed to support Maslow's propositions about the nature, number, and expression of human needs, at least in working adults. Alderfer's framework is presented in Figure 2.

— — — — — — — — — —

Insert Figure 2 about here

— — — — — — — — — —

An interesting characteristic of Alderfer's theory as shown in Figure 2 is that it explicitly considers, following on Argyris' works, the issue of frustration as well as the idea of satisfaction. The theory then, postulates not only outcomes to be expected from behavior/environments which increase levels of gratifaction but also the consequences of behaviors/environments which decrease levels of gratification. Environments that facilitate an individual's need gratification will be satisfying whereas environments that hinder gratification will be frustrating. But what is it about human needs that make them so important and how is an institution to know which needs are prepotent for any particular individuals so that the "right" environment can be created?

There have literally been hundreds of studies connected with gratification of the Maslow-type need for self-actualization (Locke, 1976). Paradoxically, the studies have overwhelmingly failed to support Maslow's five-needs classification scheme or his hierarchy of prepotency, but this is not totally surprising given that the perspective was designed to be a developmental theory and not a theory of only adult behavior.

However, the need theories of the Maslow heritage do seem to provide a useful framework for understanding the kinds of people likely to be found

Figure 2

Alderfer's Theory*

| Hypothesized Needs | Basic Propositions |
| --- | --- |
| Existence - all the material and physiological desires. | 1. The less existence needs are satisfied, the more they will be desired. |
| Relatedness - desire for mutual (sharing) relationships with significant others. | 2. The less relatedness needs are satisfied, the more existence needs will be desired. |
| Growth - desire to have creative or productive effects on self and the environment. | 3. The more existence needs are satisfied, the more relatedness needs will be desired. |
| | 4. The less relatedness needs are satisfied, the more they will be desired. |
| | 5. The less growth needs are satisfied, the more relatedness needs will be desired. |
| | 6. The more relatedness needs are satisfied, the more growth needs will be desired |
| | 7. The more growth needs are satisfied, the more they will be desired. |

*From Alderfer (1972)

in at least one type of academic setting, i.e., a research oriented one. These kinds of settings require people who are able to work independently, who will set their own goals, who do not require supervision, and who have sufficient self-esteem to permit them to make their ideas public to a potentially ego-threatening world - the world of peer review. It would seem that these are the kinds of people who have developed, in the Maslowian sense, to the level where self-actualization is the need requiring gratification. The kinds of specific behaviors this need activates are difficult to identify but, following the career entry issues discussed earlier, the kinds of environment required for gratification is fairly clear and the academic world fits the description.

McClelland's Efforts

Almost totally independent of the Maslow tradition, McClelland and his coworkers (Atkinson, 1958; Atkinson & Raynor, 1974; McClelland, et al., 1953) have pursued another need-based conceptualization of work behavior and economic achievement. The central need state hypothesized is the need for achievement (the others are need for affiliation and need for power).

Some interesting evidence supports the idea that people and societies which project achievement-oriented styles in their writings, artwork, elementary school texts, pottery design, and so forth, eventually are shown to achieve more in economic terms (e.g., salary and managerial level at the individual level; generation of electricity at the societal level; see Brown, 1968 for an excellent review). In addition, there is some laboratory and field research which suggests that achievement-oriented work settings can be created that facilitate the display of any achievement

motivation which people do have, especially settings that present a challenge, a moderate level of risk and tangible indices of success (Litwin & Stringer, 1968). Finally, it has also been shown that some environments can inhibit the display of achievement-oriented behavior in work settings (where individual initiative tends not to be rewarded; Andrews, 1967) and that women may display their nAch through behaviors different from those engaged in by men (i.e., through affiliative means; Stein & Bailey, 1973).

The findings of McClelland and his colleagues appear to apply well to faculty who join settings emphasizing teaching and research. These settings would appear to fit the description of an environment for high achievement oriented people, i.e., one offering challenge with moderate risk. The challenge and risk of research are balanced by its frequent routineness, by the low career risk typified by teaching, and, for some, by the security of tenure. This is not to say that teaching is an unchallenging, no-risk occupation. On the contrary, teaching certainly offers great challenges for those who pursue it, and for some individuals, it may also pose high personal risks. The risks for faculty in teaching settings are self-imposed; the risks for faculty in a setting emphasizing either research or both teaching and research are externally imposed. Thus peer review for the researcher is an ever-present standard and the probabilities of success are on the one hand lower and on the other hand knowable primarily only in the long run.

## Need-based Theories and Academic Motivation

For most of the need theories, unsatisfied needs are thought to be the activators of behavior. This energizing capacity of needs is thought

to come from the psychological tension or imbalance created by an unfulfilled need. The behavior activated by the need state is gratification-seeking behavior. Thus, individuals are viewed as displaying and, thereby, exploring various behaviors until those behaviors that reduce tension and restore balance are found. We "know" which needs are active for people only through inference and attribution; we infer the nature of the need which activated behavior by observing the type of behavior which individuals display in the absence of external constraints and/or in the presence of a range of potential gratifiers. We infer a need for food, for example, by observing food-seeking and consuming behavior. By the same logic, we may infer that people who persist in particular behaviors in the academic setting do so because the setting provides some gratification for particular needs or sets of needs.

By its unstructured and autonomous nature the typical academic environment appears to us to afford the opportunity for people to fulfill any one of a number of needs but primarily those needs which are developmentally the most mature. Thus, while need theories are probably not useful for predicting people's academic subspecialty, we feel that the nature of the academic environment attracts people who tend to be oriented to continued identity development through self-initiated behavior.

Following the need theories, we see that people remain in academe not because they actively choose to, but rather because they must; they must because the academic world is one which is likely to provide the environment in which the pursuit of the gratification of faculty needs is most likely. Which specific needs can be satisfied will differ across individuals and settings. In settings where both research and teaching

are emphasized, the setting emphasized in this chapter, reality suggests that individuals with strong self-actualization/growth and nAch can gratify those needs; people with more socially or affiliation oriented needs are likely to experience frustration there for, if they puruse teaching to the exclusion of research, they will lose their membership. For people with strong achievement orientations, who find gratification in research, teaching may be the cost of remaining in the "right" environment and/or it may provide the security which turns a seemingly large risk into a moderate one. Conversely, people with strong affiliation/social relatedness needs may become frustrated in the traditional publish-or-perish world of a research university and be more likely to choose a setting with greater, or even exclusive, emphasis on teaching.

Whereas, the theories we have discussed so far propose an end-state which people achieve when their central need or needs become gratified, Erikson (1959) has proposed that a need for a sense of continuation of the self emerges as the final stage of human development. Although people are ultimately limited in their life accomplishments by their mortality, they can, he noted, nonetheless continue to have an impact on their environments through their progeny. For any faculty or teacher, then, a legacy may remain through the students they have trained. Erikson's view permits us to propose that as academicians engage in need-gratifying behaviors, i.e., as needs are fulfilled, continued fulfillment may be directed at developing others because this activity helps to insure the scholar's continued existence. We suggest then, that mentoring in academicians is another career avenue they take but that such mentoring

behavior is likely only in those who have been relatively successful in gratifying their central needs through their academic work, whether that work be teaching, research, or both.

But what of the academic who does not or cannot reach need gratification? What predictions can be made about faculty who are unable to gratify their needs in the academic role? All of the need theorists we have reviewed address the plight of those for whom fulfillment has been stunted. Maslow (1968, 1970) and Argyris (1962) are explicit about the "psychological illness" which can result from having need gratification frustrated. They suggest that in extreme cases, when the inner nature is "crushed" or when a person is separated from the self, the pathologies produced may include: boredom, general depression of bodily functions, and steady deterioration of intellectual life. Less extreme, but detrimental nonetheless, are various forms of psychological withdrawal, such as decreased involvement in work and the work world, and greater emphasis on the material and monetary aspects of work. Researchers who cannot publish unless they work with others may, for example, respond to their frustration at individual achievement with an exaggerated concern over assignments and authorship. Teachers frustrated by their inability to conduct their classes as they expected might begin to denigrate the ability of their students instead.

Alderfer (1972) also suggests a withdrawal from the source of need frustration but his model permits redirection of behavior to the satisfaction of other needs. Indeed, as shown in Figure 2, he postulates that frustration of growth needs increases the desires for relatedness

satisfaction and frustration of relatedness needs leads to the desire for existence gratification; a hierarchy in reverse is his proposal. Alderfer might predict that non-published researchers would turn to the challenge and affiliation available through teaching, leaving the high career risk of research to others. Teachers might give up their occupations for ones that at least pay well.

Only the work of Argyris and McClelland suggest positive and forward moving alternatives when faced with frustrated needs; i.e., seek satisfaction of the same needs by changing the environment or creating a new one. For research academicians, this may take the form of physical withdrawal to another institution or of acting to change the present institutional environment (e.g.. through faculty unionization, membership in proactive organization or administration in order to change policies) or improving one's skills in order to create a better fit with the environment (e.g., improving writing skills for grant proposals and journal articles, attending symposia and conferences, etc.). Teaching faculty, similarly, might move to another institution or assume greater participation in administration and policy-making or extend their education in order to to improve their teaching skills.

Because need theories are not very specific in their behavioral predictions, it is difficult to say precisely how people will react to need frustration. However, we can propose that general withdrawal from the chosen academic role suggests frustration in that role and that such frustration is likely to result in redirected efforts, some of which may be non-productive from an academic standpoint (e.g., withdrawal to industry).

More specifically, Alderfer's theory suggests that frustration of growth needs (i.e., through lack of research and publication) would yield redirection of energy into more interpersonally oriented behaviors such as administration or teaching. Failure to satisfy interpersonal or growth needs might, however, lead to a preoccupation with material needs alone and result in such activities as consulting to the exclusion of research.

## Conclusion

This brief introduction to need-based theories of work motivation with particular reference to university faculty has suggested that they are probably high on the need for self-actualization, growth and nAch. As such, they will be attracted to moderately risky settings which offer them the opportunity to be autonomous, to be investigative, to be challenged, and to be successful. Some hypotheses were derived regarding the kinds of people likely to enter such settings and be successful, and some of the consequences of success and frustration. Specifically it was suggested that faculty who have their needs relatively satisfied are likely to take on a mentoring function while those who are frustrated are more likely to redirect their energies away from students and research.

One thing is clear from the need theories: In order to effectively deal with the particular profile of the needs the typical academic may bring to the academic environment, academic institutions must develop and maintain environments that permit gratification by providing a specific combination of attributes. For the academic researcher/teacher, autonomy in establishing the goals and means of research, challenge in the form of

outcomes that are tangible and represent success, and some procedures to reduce the risk inherent in the above (like teaching or tenure) such that the entire experience is moderately risky in nature. For the teacher, active affiliation opportunities plus competent students who will provide both affiliation and challenge producing the kind of need gratification which will result in mentoring behavior.

## References

Alderfer, C. P. Human needs in organizational settings. New York: Free Press, 1972.

Andrews, J. D. W. The achievement motive and advancement in two types of organizations. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1967, 6, 163-168.

Argyris, C. Personality and organization. New York: Harper, 1957.

Argyris, C. Understanding organizational behaviors. Homewood, IL: Dorsey, 1960.

Argyris, C. Interpersonal competence and organizational effectiveness. Homewood, IL: Irwin, 1962.

Atkinson, J. W. (Ed.) Motives in fantasy, action and society. Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1958.

Atkinson, J. W., & Raynor, J. O. (Eds.) Motivation and achievement. New York: Halstead, 1974.

Bess, J. L. Anticipatory socialization of graduate students. Research in Higher Education, 1978, 8, 289-317.

Brown, R. Social psychology. New York: Free Press, 1968.

Erikson, H. E. Identity and the life cycle. Psychological Issues, 1959, 1, 31-32.

Litwin, G. H., & Stringer, R. A. Motivation and organizational climate. Boston: Harvard Business School, Division of Research, 1968.

Locke, E. A. The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In, M. D. Dunnette (Ed.) Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976.

McClelland, D. C. Achievement motivation can be developed. Harvard Business Review, 1965, 43, 6-24.

McClelland, D. C., Atkinson, J. W., Clark, R. A., & Lowell, E. L. The achievement motive. New York: Appleton-Century, 1953.

McGregor, D. M. The human side of enterprise. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960.

Maslow, A. H. A theory of human motivation. Psychological Review, 1943, 50, 390-396.

Maslow, A. H. Motivation and personality. New York: Harper, 1954.

Maslow, A. H. Toward a psychology of being (2nd ed.). New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1968.

Maslow, A. H. Motivation and personality (2nd ed.). New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Schein, E. H. Career dynamics: Matching individual and organizational needs. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978.

Stein, A. H., & Bailey, M. M. The socialization of achievement orientation in females. Psychological Bulletin, 1973, 80, 345-366.