

Of Carrots and Sticks: A Behavioral Approach to Motivation

MERRILYN AKPAPUNA and Douglas A. Johnson

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July 20th, 2017

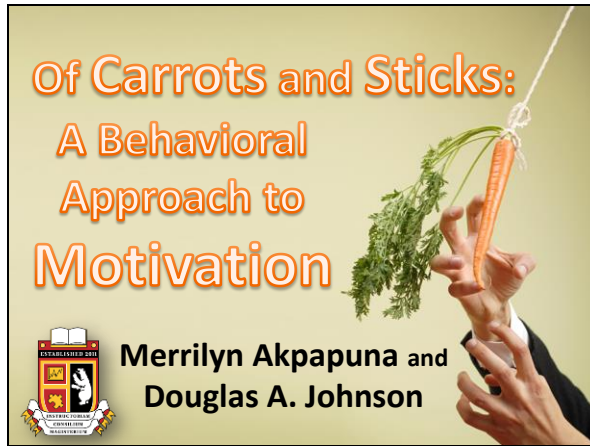
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- Defining motivation
- Often discussed as a theoretical construct inferred from goal-directed behaviors
- This conceptualization makes it difficult to engineer motivation
- Alternative: Conceptualize as factors that influence goal directed behaviors
- Extrinsic vs. intrinsic distinctions

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- Intrinsic motivation is not easily explained
- The difficulty in defining intrinsic motivation is closely linked with the difficulty in assessing internal events
- Ultimately, intrinsic motivation is being defined by our ignorance
- We claim a person is intrinsically motivated when we cannot find any external factors controlling and maintaining the person's behavior

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- Intrinsic motivation is often considered innate and the superior source of motivation
- You are either one of the elite that has it or you're not.
- With an underlying assumption that intrinsic motivation is innate and people who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to succeed, it is not surprising that the recommendation is to hire intrinsically motivated people and leave them to do what they do
- What happens when we cannot find intrinsically motivated people who have the KSAs required for the job?

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- A major shortcoming in much of the research is equating rewards to reinforcers
- Not all rewards are reinforcers
- A reinforcer by definition increases the probability of behavior
- A reward may or may not increase behavior

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- The problem with assuming that rewards are synonymous to reinforcers is that it leads to flawed research conclusions.
- Rewards that fail to increase behavior often lead to researchers blaming reinforcers
- Reinforcers are idiosyncratic and therefore preference assessments are critical

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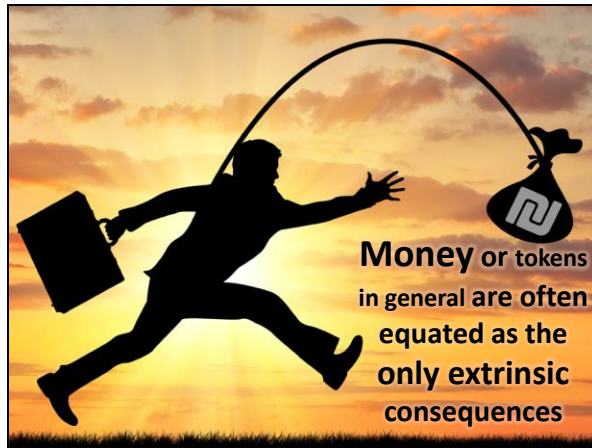
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- Another major shortcoming is the presumption that money and tokens are the only reinforcing consequences
- Reinforcing consequences range from praise and feedback to comprehensive monetary and nonmonetary incentives

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- Furthermore, consequences are not the only way to motivate
- Antecedent manipulations such as job aids, redesigning processes, clarifying expectations, setting goals, and motivating operations are relevant

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- Defining motivating operations
- Although important, unconditioned motivating operations are not practically relevant for most of the workplace

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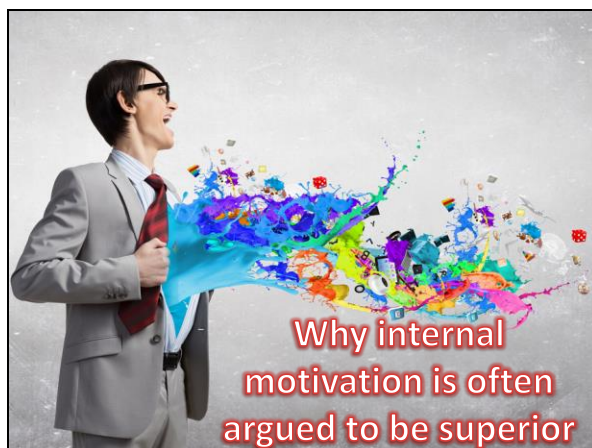
- Alternatively, conditioned motivating operations—in which the evocative effects are acquired through learning—remain quite relevant for workplace interventions.

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- Little more about intrinsic motivation
- Skinner first proposed automatic reinforcement as an explanation for behaviors with no extrinsic rewards way back in the 1950s.
- Automatic reinforcement occurs when a person's behavior creates a favorable outcome without the involvement of another person

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- Automatic reinforcement exists independent of the social environment making it occur a little more reliably.
- Creativity is often seen as something inside of a person that just bursts out
- Intrinsically motivated behavior is said to result in creativity. This is probably because it can persist in the absence of direct teaching due to automatic reinforcement

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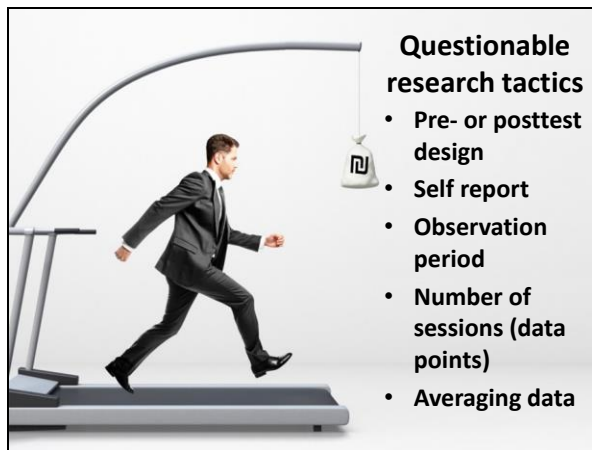
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- Overjustification effect is “a below-baseline decrease in the rate of performance of ‘intrinsically motivated’ behavior that follows a period during which the behavior is extrinsically rewarded”
- This change is implied to be permanent which helps explain the reason why extrinsic rewards are frowned upon

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Questionable research tactics

- Pre- or posttest design
- Self report
- Observation period
- Number of sessions (data points)
- Averaging data

- Much of the research on the overjustification effect has employed questionable research tactics.
- The problem with pre- and post-test designs is there is not a lot of scientific control.
- Self-reports are often biased and not a reliable measure of behavior
- Many studies used very few sessions with short observation periods and no follow up data was collected
- If extrinsic motivation is truly detrimental to intrinsic interest, then, that reduction in interest should hold true a week, month and even year from the end of the study
- Averaging data can also be a problem because it hides important information

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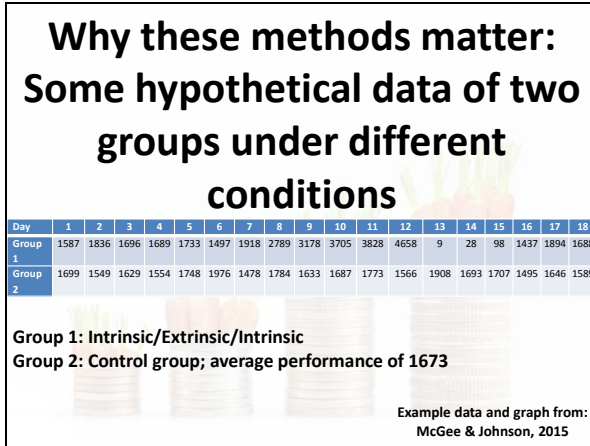
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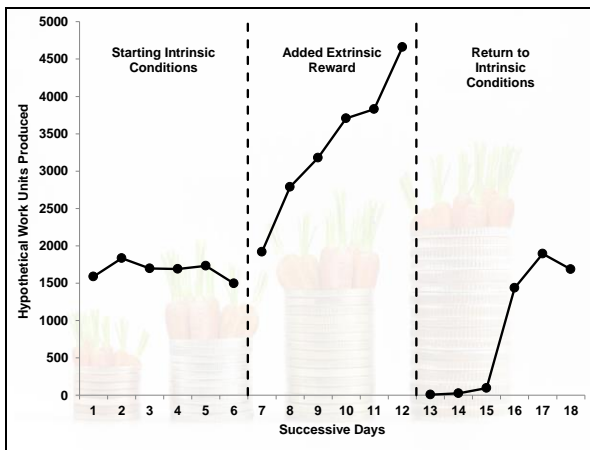
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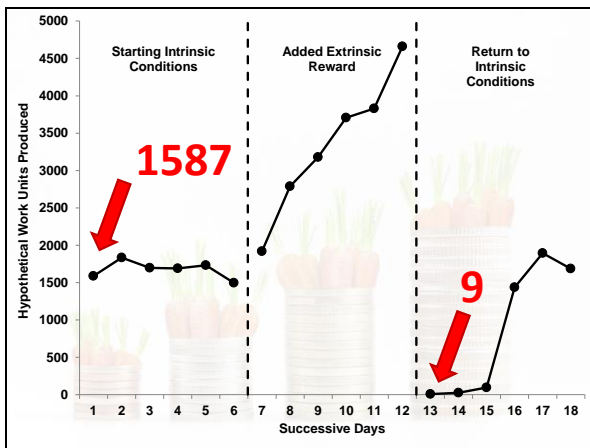


- Example from McGee and Johnson (2015) to illustrate why certain research techniques are problematic

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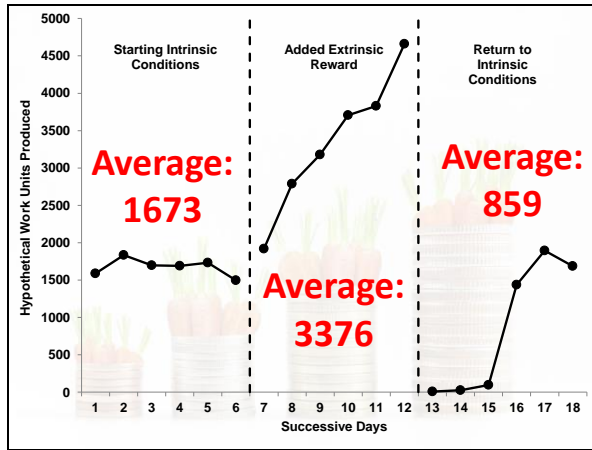
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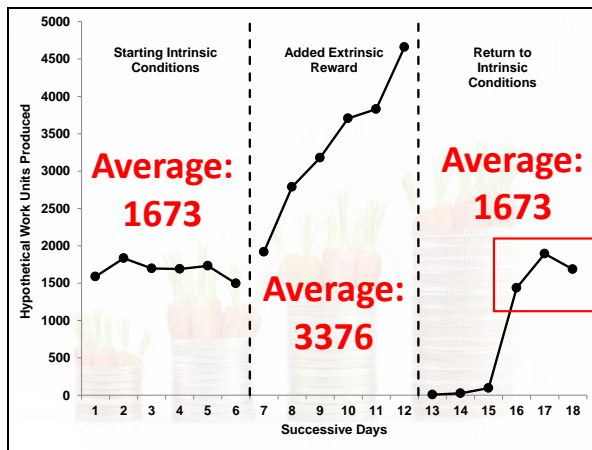
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- Basically, the way data is presented can tell different stories

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- Task contingent rewards are given irrespective of the quality or quantity of the task
- Dickinson explains that task-contingent rewards have significantly decreased post-reward performance relative to performance-contingent rewards

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- Satiation due to repeated exposure and deprivation of alternatives

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- More research needs to be done that does not ignore the major issues talked about in this presentation

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- It is important to engineer conditioned motivating operations in the work environment to evoke the goal directed behaviors we are interested in and to make the reinforcers we provide more reinforcing
- If we hope for quality and quantity in production, we need to make sure we are reinforcing both. If efficiency is essential, we need to make sure that we reinforce it.
- Variety is also important. As much as possible, we need to vary the tasks we provide our employees in order to maintain motivation

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