



# Definitions of motivation

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# The problems of defining motivation

- A major difficulty in the psychology of motivation has been the lack of consensus on its definition. In an attempt to resolve the terminological confusion, 102 statements defining or criticizing the concept were compiled from a variety of sources.

# Definitions of Motivation

**Energizing Definitions**  
(emphasizing energy arousal)

**Directional~Functional Definitions**  
(emphasizing choice, incentives, goal-directed behavior, or adaptive effects)

**Phenomenological Definitions**  
(emphasizing conscious or experiential processes)

**Physiological Definitions** (emphasizing internal physical processes)

**Vector Definitions** (emphasizing both energy arousal and direction)

## Phenomenological Definitions

- "The original criterion of motivation and the one that is still used by all human beings except behavioral psychologists is the subjective one. I am motivated when I feel desire or want or yearning or wish or lack. (Abraham Maslow, 1955 )
- "A process governing choices made by persons or lower organisms among alternative forms of voluntary activity." (V. H. Vroom, 1964 )

## Physiological Definitions (emphasizing internal physical processes)

- "Traditionally, when psychologists speak of motivation, they refer to primary drives--states of behavior that are essential to the maintenance of the organism .... but animals show other types of motivated behaviors which are not nearly so well understood but may also be necessary for well-being: curiosity, manipulation of objects and exploratory behavior. ("R. L. Isaacson, R. J. Douglas, S. F. Lubar, and L. W. Schmaltz, 1971 )
- "Motivation is a term used by psychologists to denote internal processes such as hunger that serve to direct the behavior of the organism. Motivational processes are inferred from changes in the direction, intensity, or persistence of behavior."(Jackson Beatty, 1975)

## Energizing Definitions (emphasizing energy arousal)

- "It will be convenient to stretch the ordinary meaning of motivation somewhat and make it equivalent to mobilization or activation, so as to cover all o-factors not included under the head of ability." (Robert S. Woodworth and Harold Schlosberg, 1954)
- "Motivation is the inner thrust behind behavior." (Jozef Cohen, 1970 )

## **Directional~Functional Definitions (emphasizing choice, incentives, goal-directed behavior, or adaptive effects)**

- **"The condition known as drive, or motivation, occurs in an organism when a sequence is interrupted. These interruptions can occur for various reasons. In the case of the so-called primary drives, such as hunger and sex, the interruptions are internal or endogenous .... Fear, avoidance, escape from punishment involve 'drives' that occur as a result of environmentally induced interruptions of behavior sequences. ("Keller Breland and Marian Breland, 1966 )**
- **"We can define motivation as a state that directs an organism in certain ways to seek particular goals."( Carl W. Cotman and James L. McGaugh, 1980 )**

## **Vector Definitions (emphasizing both energy arousal and direction)**

- **"Motivation' refers here in a rather general sense to the energizing of behavior, and especially to the sources of energy in a particular set of responses that keep them temporarily dominant over others and account for continuity and direction in behavior." (Donald O. Hebb, 1955 )**
- **"Motivation concerns those events--the pushes and pulls that move us to action .... variables that activate, energize, and frequently direct behavior." (Robert E. Silverman, 1978 )**



## CONCLUSION:

- **The analysis of definitions help researchers and theorists to define the field by specifying the types of variables they study. Other writers may devise an alternative classification system, discover some developmental pattern, or suggest a better model for a consensual definition.**

## REFERENCES:

- Kleinginna, P. R., & Kleinginna, A. M. (1981). *A categorized list of motivation definitions, with a suggestion for a consensual definition. Motivation and Emotion, 5(3), 263–291.*