The puzzle of positive motivation

The hidden energies that drive performance

Contents

1. Introduction

Advance HE convened a face-to-face members' event on the topic of *Unlocking the puzzle of positive motivation* earlier in 2020 that now feels a lifetime ago. A 'tweet chat' also followed the event, continuing the conversation and engaging with staff through nearly a thousand comments on the topic of motivation over the course of just an hour.

So what has happened since? The disruptive force of COVID-19 has meant that there is no end to advice focusing on supporting motivation to face, survive and thrive within our new global reality. For instance, Harvard Business Review provides tips on How to Keep your team motivated, remotely and the World Economic Forum outlines 5 ways US universities are helping tackle COVID-19.

Our original event was co-created with our Advance HE members who engaged in rich discussion that included their own thoughts on the forces that motivated them. The result was a host of graphical motivation 'snapshots' contained in this publication.

Advance HE Principal Adviser, Doug Parkin, grounded these participant reflections within a high level summary of representational models and theories that demonstrate multiple manifestations of motivation and that help to describe "*why-we-do-what-we-do-in-the-way-that-we-do-it.*"

To get the group's creative thinking flowing, we captioned "the giant carrot of purpose" – included in the range of models and described by Doug as an antidote to the classic 'carrot and stick' approach: "a modern metaphor to capture what unites us, the shared goal, vision or purpose that releases our hidden human energies and brings work or learning to life." It is that fundamental thing, that vision or big idea, that transcends our differences. Working with the concept of motivation is intense and creative work and we then worked with the group to explore a whole range of new models, including:

- A zoetrope – motivation itself is not static, it is constantly changing
- An aboriginal talking stick that actively engages every individual in the group
- A plant that thrives – or not – based on its soil and growing conditions
- A rocket ship comprising a host of different motivations
- A journey of metaphors – a mythical land
- A moving vehicle driven and fuelled by purpose.

When Advance HE planned this members' event we also chose to invite guest speakers and to reach beyond some of the 'usual suspects' whose views we regularly see shared across the HE sector. We asked for our speakers' agreement to have their sessions transcribed for this publication so we could share their words and provocations in their own voices. Are these thought pieces still relevant as we grapple with the next normal(s) of a COVID-19 world? We believe the answer is a resounding yes. This publication contains the following accounts:

Paul Blackmore is a Professor of Higher Education at the Policy Institute, King's College London. Paul shares his research on the impact of prestige as a motivational force in academic life and how this differs from a focus on organisational reputation. These tensions still exist in a COVID-19 world and will need to be grappled with in determining the future shape and size of our universities and of our sector. In considering what this means, he

reflects, "If we assume others have the same motivations as us then our Titanic goes to the bottom of the sea…it means if you can span a boundary then that is a very powerful ability."

Shraddha (Shades) Chaudhary is a Communications and Engagement Officer within Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Exeter. In her thought piece, Shades discusses her own approach to motivating others, the importance of mobilising around a common cause and the challenges in doing so. She emphasises the importance of "promoting engagement through purpose, feeling valued, asking directly for what is needed, maintaining a comprehensive communication and feedback loop and speaking the language of the listener."

Jim Longhurst is a Professor of Environmental Science and Assistant Vice Chancellor for Environment and Sustainability at the University of the West of England (UWE) Bristol. In his piece, Jim reflects on his passion for the environment and on additional motivators which inform the work he does including "working with people, helping people to develop, seeing people do things they perhaps at first didn't think they might be able to do."

Robiu Salisu is a student inclusion officer with responsibility for improving Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Undergraduate Students' experiences at the University of Bristol. His piece focuses on how he uses his own personal values to inform his work with others. He shares the approach he has taken to identifying his core values and encourages all readers to consider their own values. He reflects, "I think this is a really important area of work, helping people to find what motivates them to get the best from their roles."

Perhaps the most striking observation on motivation contained in all of these accounts is not so much about the puzzle of what we need to personally do to get out of bed each day: days that right now are filled with video teleconferences, emails, decisions, deadlines and anxious concern for our current and future physical, mental and financial health and wellbeing. Instead, during this historic time of COVID-19, perhaps more than ever, the act of leading includes considering how we individually and collectively span boundaries and demonstrate inclusive and genuine compassion for others. We do this by listening to many voices and by developing these relationships; curious to understand others' creativity and capabilities and the motivations that they bring to work and by being honest in sharing our own motivations and vulnerabilities. In this way we can chart a course towards a more positive future that reaches well beyond the pandemic.

Cindy Vallance

Assistant Director, Knowledge, Innovation and Delivery, Advance HE

2. Unlocking the Puzzle of Positive Motivation

2.1 Author biography

Doug Parkin is currently Principal Adviser for Leadership and Management at Advance HE. He is responsible for a range of key open leadership programmes as well as undertaking bespoke consultancy assignments for universities and working internationally. With experience across a range of organisations and sectors, from the civil service to the arts, from large UK charities to higher education, he has explored and considered leadership from a wide variety of perspectives: academic leadership, educational leadership, medical leadership, the leadership of public services, leadership in the arts, and leadership in a not-for-profit voluntary sector environment. One question that has been a common thread of Doug's work in all of these environments is how to engage human energy, particularly that elusive hidden energy called 'motivation'. His writing has explored the notion of liberating leadership, the importance of creating organisations that people enjoy and the observation regarding empowerment that 'the land of the possible is a happier place to be'.

2.2 What motivates us? – The fire from within

Open questions can reveal so much! To begin our day exploring the puzzle of positive motivation we started by focussing on some open questions regarding "what 'boosts' and what 'bugs' you?". In standing discussions with partners around the room participants considered these questions and responded using the interactive presentation software, Mentimeter. The answers appeared step by step as word clouds, with the relative sizes of the responses changing and re-changing to reflect popularity. And while only a small and unscientific sample, it was fascinating to see, based on the forty-plus respondents, the items that featured most strongly from this thin slice of the UK higher education sector.

First came the 'boosts' question: *What motivates or inspires you in your work/current role?*
Up to three responses were allowed per person using 'just one or two words':

As can be seen, the most popular responses related to:

- People
- Team
- Feedback and recognition
- Students
- Problem solving
- Creativity and challenge
- Empowerment and ownership
- Success.

Next came the 'bugs' question: *What demotivates you or erodes motivation in your work/current role?* Once again up to three responses were allowed per person using 'just one or two words':

This comes across as a fascinating snapshot of the kinds of things that inhibit or get in the way of the hidden human energies that can emerge when motivation is engaged. The most frequently contributed responses here are:

- Politics
- Negativity
- Red tape and bureaucracy
- Repetition
- Prejudice
- Micromanagement
- Selfishness and stupidity
- Lack of recognition.

Moving on from this, and to continue this initial exploration of 'what makes us tick?' as a newly formed group drawn from across a wide range of higher education institutions, we explored four motivational orientations based on the work of the late American psychologist David McClelland (1917 to 1998). The four orientations are:

- Achievement orientated – the need to be active and to perform well – concerned with:
  - Meeting or surpassing expectations (own and others') and standards of excellence
  - Making a significant and potentially unique contribution
  - Doing things well, quickly and efficiently
  - Competing successfully with others either directly or indirectly
  - Progressing and realising personal career goals.

- Influence orientated – the need to have a voice and the power to influence or impress others – concerned with:
    - Having control over decisions and situations
    - Ability through position, personality and circumstances to influence others
    - Being influential - recognition through status and/or position
    - Knowing their voice has impact – achieving greater responsibility
    - Building a reputation and possibly acquiring prestige.

- Affiliation orientated – the need for harmony and to establish and maintain warm personal working relationships – concerned with:
    - Belonging as a valued member of a social group
    - Being part of a group or team with a clear identity
    - Warm and harmonious relationships – being liked and accepted
    - Being closely engaged with others in the work situation – emotional bonds
    - Smooth interactions - minimising the degree of difficulty and conflict.

- Security orientated – a focus on what the future holds and the need to feel secure at work – concerned with:
    - Knowing what the future holds and their part within it
    - Being valued for both their current and future contributions
    - The validity of their role and contribution
    - Recognition of the importance of their knowledge and skills
    - Effective planning and financial soundness.

Using these four orientations as a basis for personal reflection, and once again following a short discussion with a partner, participants responded to the following question: *Which of the four motivational orientations is normally most important for you at work? What is your balance?* To capture and display anonymised responses Mentimeter was again used, this time applying the technique of distributing 100 points across the four areas (one response per person). The results appeared as a simple bar chart:

33% Achievement (activity/impact)

25% Influence (voice/power)

24% Affiliation (team/belonging)

18% Security (now and future)
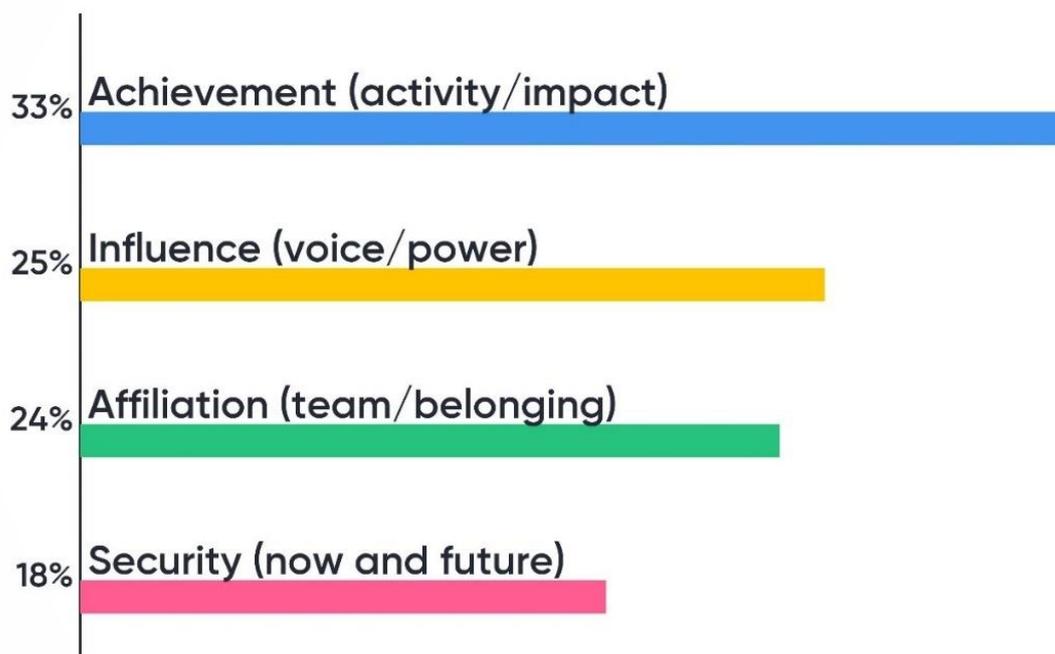
Building upon this, the final introductory exercise invited the participants to effectively play with McClelland's model. They were asked to come up with a fifth element: *If you could add a fifth element to the model (thinking particularly about HE), what would it be?* This time for the Mentimeter word cloud just one response was allowed per person, using 'just one or two words':

Without attempting to impose a single strong conclusion on this, it is fascinating nevertheless to see the emphasis around work-life balance, wellbeing and enjoyment as a suggested additional motivational orientation. Who we are and *how we are* is, perhaps, seen through a contemporary lens every bit as important as 'what we do'.

_____

Mentimeter - *Create interactive presentations & meetings, wherever you are* - https://www.mentimeter.com/ (Accessed May 2020).

McClelland, D.C. (1961). *The Achieving Society*. New York: Van Nostrand.

McClelland, D.C. (1987). *Human motivation.* New York: University of Cambridge.

2.3   The shape of motivation – ten models and theories

With the intention of providing background and stimulus for the main interactive elements of the day, we presented a series of shapes and images of motivation for the participants to play with, both conceptually and physically. The basis of this stimulus was that it would scaffold the creative exercises that followed when participants working in groups would be invited to actively develop and present their own shapes and models of motivation, using a wide range of art and craft resources. The models included some well-known theories of human motivation as well as slightly more tangential elements with a similarly visual sense of dynamic. Some of the shapes were a little contrived but most relied on the popularly

known visual representation of the model/theory in question. Between them and in various ways these models touch upon and in some cases link together the five dimensions of human motivation: intrinsic, extrinsic, social, competitive and leader inspired.

In the space available here we will simply list the ten models with a very short note of description, an attribution, and detail of the shape or image used to present it and bring it to life. Some of these models, it should be noted, have a more natural resonance with educational environments than others.

1. Primal Drives
   - Shape or image – Four Fs – F, F, F ,F
   - Based on instinct and evolutionary adaptation: fighting, fleeing (or freezing), feeding and fornicating
   - Karl H Pribram, 1958 and 1960.

2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
   - Shape or image – Pyramid
   - A needs-based theory of motivation building up from basic physiological needs through a series of steps to self-fulfilment or self-actualisation
   - Abraham Maslow, 1954.

3. Expectancy Theory
   - Shape or image – Bell curve
   - Expectations based on the probability of success as regards the task or objective, moving from things that are 'too easy' through to things that are 'too hard' with a sweet spot close to the middle where there is just the right amount of stretch (challenging but achievable)
   - Victor Vroom, 1964.

4. Two-Factor Theory
   - Shape or image – Rocket ship
   - Rather than a single continuum from dissatisfaction through to complete satisfaction, this model puts forward a two-factor view, with firstly 'hygiene' or maintenance factors (e.g. salary and work conditions) that if addressed remove dissatisfaction and provide a launch pad, and then secondly based on this the 'motivators' (e.g. achievement and recognition) that can take off (rocket ship) leading to higher levels of positive satisfaction
   - Frederick Hertzberg, 1959.

5. Motivational Orientations
   - Shape or image – Bubbles
   - As described above in the preceding section, four motivational orientations that may be held in balance, but with potentially a disposition towards a primary orientation based on personality, life experience or context (the relative sizes of the four bubbles)
   - David McClelland, 1961 and later.

6. Equity Theory
   - Shape or image – Scales
   - Perceptions of fairness and equity linked to the balance between 'job inputs' and 'job outputs' with the main comparison being with colleagues who perform jobs similar in difficulty and complexity (social comparison and 'referent others')
   - John Stacey Adams, 1963.

7. Influencing Styles
   - Shape or image – Push and pull
   - The degree to which effective influence works in some situations and with some people through 'push' (driving with your energy or through the force of reason) and in other situations and with other people through 'pull' (drawing out other people's energy through vision and narrative or through fostering a sense of collective community engagement)
   - No direct attribution - push and pull can be found in a variety of settings and contexts in addition to organisational behaviour, including marketing, logistics, migration theory, systems theory and even fine art.

8. Start with WHY
   - Shape or image – The Golden Circle
   - Flipping the conventional sequence, where we begin by talking about *'what we do'*, this model starts with 'why' in the centre of the circle and highlights the importance of talking about this first, then 'how' and then 'what'. 'Why' expresses the meaning or 'the point' of what your organisation, or your part of the organisation, does and this gives life and energy
   - Simon Sinek, 2009.

9. Drive: the surprising truth about what motivates us
   - Shape or image – AMP
   - Challenging established ideas of contingent 'if/then' reward systems, this model argues that in contemporary organisations with work that involves high levels of complexity and creativity a new intrinsic model of performance and personal satisfaction is required:
     - **A**utonomy – the urge to direct our own lives
     - **M**astery – the desire to get better and better at something that matters
     - **P**urpose – the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves
   - Daniel Pink, 2009.

10. The Giant Carrot of Purpose

- Shape or image – A giant carrot!
- Instead of the very well-known image of carrot and stick (extrinsic rewards and punishment) to bring about desired behaviour which goes back to at least the mid-1800s, why not reject that notion and instead use a giant carrot? But not just any carrot, this needs to be the giant carrot of purpose! An unapologetically positive metaphor that embraces things like 'why', purpose, vision, story/narrative, values, service, impact, 'the big idea' and truth!
- Doug Parkin, 2020.

This selection of ten models and theories, all presented through active imagery or shapes, provides a powerful basis for not just thinking about motivation in one way, or through a single lens, but instead conjuring with the many manifestations of human motivation and the complex psychology, sociology and business philosophy that underpins our deeper understanding of *why-we-do-what-we-do-in-the-way-that-we-do-it.*

3. Prestige in Academic Life

3.1 Author biography

Paul Blackmore is Professor of Higher Education at The Policy Institute, King's College London. Previously he held a Chair at Coventry University and was Director of Centre for Academic Practice at the University of Warwick for 10 years. Paul's expertise is in strategic leadership and change in higher education, particularly curriculum change and the nature and role of professional expertise. Prestige in academic life has been a major focus in recent years with funded studies using the idea of a prestige economy, investigating issues such as academic leadership and interdisciplinarity. His book on prestige in academic life was published in 2015. Paul is a member of the International Council of Free University of Berlin and the Governing Council of SRHE. He supervises PhDs and teaches at Master's level on educational leadership and management and was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship in 2013.

3.2 Introduction

I spend all of my working life working in universities trying to improve the quality of teaching. That generally means that I'm trying to persuade a lot of people to do things they'd rather not be doing a lot of the time, and I often found myself beating my head against a brick wall. So, after the first 10 years I thought it would be good to understand that brick wall a little bit better to both save my forehead and, more importantly, see if we as practitioners could walk round the brick wall to the space on the other side.

> *Unless we understand something we're not going to be able to deal with it.*

During my career, universities have I believe got better and better at the so-called megaphone solution to management:

1. be clear what you're doing

2. communicate what you're doing

3. have lots of measures that you pass back to people to shame them, and then

4. everyone will work a lot harder.

That, I'm afraid, is the paradigm we were in, and which results in a succession of shiny, new initiatives, which unfortunately always meet a metaphorical iceberg called '*prestige*'.

Prestige, derived from the Latin *praestigium*, meaning a delusion or a trick! We're not comfy with prestige, and we pretend we don't do prestige, but actually we do. So, the obvious happens when your shiny new initiative hits an iceberg – there goes the new initiative. My life has been full of initiatives that have gone down like that, both my own and those of many others. So how do we change this?

3.3   Prestige versus reputation

What I think is important is to know the difference between '*prestige*' and '*reputation*' (Table 1). These two terms are used often completely interchangeably, but I would suggest they are very different things. A 'prestigious' thing might be, for example, a Nobel Prize. A Nobel Prize is prestigious because an individual can have it, and (and large number of) other individuals can't; so, there are a limited number of them and they're awarded by people who are on the inside of things. This is rather different from, say, the university that says it's going to hand back all its students assignments in, for example, 20 working days. That marking timetable is a reputational issue – it is a very good thing to do, but everybody can do that, it's not exclusive in any way, and it is something that's defined by what outsiders want – so it is therefore a reputational issue not a prestige issue.

I would also argue that 'prestige' generally trumps 'reputation'.

Stock of Prestige	Stock of Reputation
Measured relative to others	Measured in absolute terms
Defined by faculty and insider desire	Defined by customer desires
Depreciates slowly	Depreciates rapidly
A rival good	A non-rival good

Table 1. Definitions (Brewer, Gates and Goldman [2002]).

There are a range of things that are deemed academically prestigious, including:

+ ideas

+ large grants

+ publications, citations, exhibitions

+ keynotes

+ leading disciplinary/professional groups

+ expert reviewer/panel member

+ external examining

+ teaching awards

+ personal recognition.

An interesting point about them is they are unrelated (or at least not directly related) to money. External examining, for example, is the slowest way of becoming a millionaire I know! A prestigious university paid me just £134 to be an external examiner; the rest of it was paid in *prestige*.

So what might a script for an academic life look like? How about:

> "When you're associate professor or senior you can take a risk because you have tenure and you can go off in all sorts of interesting directions. Before that point you have to follow the schedule, have you ticked the boxes in the right journals? You've got your monograph, you've got your PhD, you've got your American Political Science Review, or whatever, you've got your big papers, you get your tenure and you're through. And then you can start to take risks and be adventurous"
>
> (Interviewee, 'Why aren't people interdisciplinary?' research project)

You can see laced into it are prestigious things that they have acquired that make them *safe*. (In case you were wondering, why people aren't interdisciplinary has a lot of it is to do with career safety; they know it's dangerous and so they don't want to do it).

This terminology, according to Bourdieu is about different items of capital – it is about goods that are rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation. These 'goods' may be things you have, or they may be who you know; they can be all sorts of things but they are things of *value*. In every area of life, there are forms of capital, and we have to understand ways of recognising it and negotiating it as a basic tenet of human life and of organisation life. It is what lies behind fundamental problems in the HE sector that never seem to go away; research being valued more highly than teaching, difficulties in achieving interdisciplinarity, genuine interdisciplinarity, and the academic and professional services staff circling each other warily, not understanding each other's language at all.

Thus, prestige is central to our mission, and ignoring it doesn't make it go away. I've had people say to me *'Don't talk about that, it doesn't help'*.

> *Unfortunately, not acknowledging the elephant in the room means you get trampled by the elephant!*

I'm not commending the elephant, I'm just saying it's there, and it is a powerful force for both good and bad. It tends to mean that people are tribal, parochial, and aren't interested in your innovation (though they may be very interested in their own innovation!).

3.4 So what does all this mean in terms of policy?

It means money is often not the answer. Firstly, people in universities generally do not think first and foremost about money or they would probably work somewhere else. Secondly, I think there are opportunities for strategic management if we know people's motivations. However, if we assume they've got the same motivations as us then our Titanic goes to the bottom of the sea. It means the *local* is really important. It means if you can span a boundary then that is a very powerful ability – to understand that there are other lands and not to imagine that everybody's living in the same metaphorical country.

> *Do we pay enough attention to the motivation context for policy and other changes?*

3.4.1 The case of teaching

You have to be canny about working with prestige – since you can't demolish it, you've got to work with. I'll use the case of teaching as an example. Several years ago the Government published a couple of very rational comments in the lead up to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), including:

> *"… research has always had priority and we want to bring teaching up to a higher level".*

The problem with this is what you don't do with the prestige economy is set up an opposing prestige economy which is not prestigious – it's a reputational thing – and to imply that you can make this one defeat that one, because prestige always wins. Far better to say:

> *"… research and teaching are part of the same activity, are they not?"*

and to grow an extended sense of prestige, rather than thinking that you can demolish somebody's background and training and interest and self-interest and replace it with something that you have devised. Start where they are, grow from that, and you stand a chance of dealing with prestige.

3.4.2 The TEF problem

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) was introduced as a counterbalance to the Research Excellence Framework (REF), and the notion has been that if we measure teaching we can make universities work harder, because the university down the road is doing better than they are. There are several flaws with this, one being the notion that teaching excellence is a matter of human capital; in other words, if people go to a good university they learn things and those things make them more powerful. Well, in one sense, sometimes that may be true. But even if the data clearly shows post-92 university 'A' is a better university than Russell Group university 'B' in terms of the learning gain, you will not reduce the queue of people at Russell Group university 'B' because we know that a whole lot of the approbation that some people get from their degrees is the prestige attached to the institution. So you can spend all the time you like measuring learning gain (if indeed you can

measure learning gain!), but it will not change the nature of the game – people go to the more prestigious universities if they're able to do so. This is a powerful example of a quite misguided attempt to change the nature of the game, founded on a failure to understand both the game and what you can do in order to work with prestige.

3.5 References

Blackmore, P (2016) Prestige in academic life: excellence and exclusion. Abingdon: Routledge.

Blackmore, P and Kandiko, C (2012) Motivation in academic life: a prestige economy. Research in Post-Compulsory Education, 16(4): 399-411.

Blackmore, P and Kandiko, C (2012) Academic motivation: exploring prestige economies. In Practice, 28(1-4). London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.

Blackmore, P and Kandiko, C (2009) Motivating academics: the role of prestige. Engage 26(13), Summer 2011. London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.

Bourdieu P (1986) The Forms of Capital.

Brewer, D, Gates, S and Goldman, C (2002) In pursuit of prestige. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

English, JF (2005). The economy of prestige. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

4. Five Key Motivators to Promote Engagement

4.1 Author Biography

Shraddha (Shades) Chaudhary is a Communications and Engagement Officer within Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Exeter. She project manages the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan and supports key projects, including the Provost Commission the Positive Working Environment Project. Shades was elected Deputy Vice-President International in 2016 and was the former Students' Guild President between 2017 and 2018. She is also an advisor to the Office for Students Board through the student panel. She works on various projects which require student and staff (and sometimes wider community) representation. This aligns strongly with her interest around what motivates people to galvanise for a cause and how communities are built between students and staff through Diversity and Inclusion work.

4.2 Introduction

I am someone who naturally brings people together, and am really interested in how people come together over a single cause and galvanise to care about one single thing. Many of us have been in a situation where those present mobilise around a common cause:

> *'We all really care about this, let's get together and solve it'.*

Having been involved in numerous fundraising drives with UNICEF, and having run a diverse range of projects and events, including my current employee engagement work, I am constantly seeking motivate key people. Bringing new people together is not easy, and the task may be challenging, but engendering action is I believe the most impactful thing you can do for students, staff, and community engagement.

4.3 How can we bringing people together and incentivise them?

Easy! Students – let's give them a pizza and Prosecco party; staff – let's give them a pay rise; community – let's give them free skills and education sessions. People will then just come along right?

Unfortunately, it is much more challenging than that, and engagement and motivation actually requires a more nuanced approach. So, what are my five key motivators in promoting engagement and bringing people together in project work?

4.3.1   Purpose

I've seen the importance of a sense of purpose come through in a lot of my projects. A good example was during my campaign to be the first international student at my university to be Student Union President. No one in the 56 years of the institution's history had actually done it. When I asked people in my campaign team, *'Why are you putting so much time into this?'*, *'what's your goal with this?'* some people turned around and went, *'… it's great for my CV; I can talk about managing a campaign.'* For others, it was because *'You're my friend, I'd like to help you, which will be nice'*. But a lot of people turned round and said, '*I want to be part of change, I want to be part of making this university an experience better for my peers'*, and that's what really motivated people to be engaged with the campaign and which kept them going. It was amazing how much people gave in that seven-day period, campaigning 14 hours a day without breaks!

4.3.2   Feeling valued

I believe that feeling valued creates a really important link to the six basic human needs: certainty, variety, connection, love, growth and contribution, and significance[1]. In particular, it really speaks to that need for significance, since people feel significant when their contribution is noticed. I actually see this in my manager a lot; an email of thanks for something as simple as booking a room makes people feel valued as he makes an effort to link an action to our goals within the University's Sovereign Strategy and it makes you feel part of that bigger purpose. It's something I've seen a lot working with people, coupled with actually listening to people. For example, our employee engagement project actually ran some post-survey listening sessions and after the first, second and third listening session, people started coming up to me and saying *'Shades, I have this idea, I really want to be part of the solution'*, and people voluntarily started joining working groups and committees with this aim. If you make people feel listened to, and make them feel valued, they are much more likely to engage. So feeling listened to, feeling heard, and feeling valued is key.

4.3.3   If you don't ask you don't get

So often we're like, *'Oh I can't ask for help for this thing'*, or, *'People definitely won't be interested in that I'm sure; it's my project, and I care, but why will they care?'.* An example of this comes from my third year at university. We ran a diversity week project in April, which coincided with dissertation and project deadlines, and I had to try to galvanise members from 34 separate societies into action. Perhaps unsurprisingly, within an hour of approaching people, 20 came back with *'Sorry, I'm really busy, I'm really stressed, I can't*

---

[1] Robbins, A. (2020). 6 core human needs. Available at: www.habitsforwellbeing.com/6-core-human-needs-by-anthony-robbins [accessed 24 March 2020].

make this work'. However, 14 were really keen and saw this as a welcome break from their studies, and from the associated academic stress. In the end, about 320 people who attended the sold-out event agreed with them! Asking in a way which showed how I would value their input (*'I feel like your expertise would be awesome on this project'*), ensured they were very happy to help.

4.3.4   The communication and feedback loop

How many people use the phrase *'feedback loop'* in their daily lives?

> *In the HE sector we always talk about 'closing the feedback loop' but unfortunately that's something a lot of us don't do.*

We see a problem, and jump to the solution - *'Right, I'll fix this by myself, I've got this'*. Then, when it comes to actually getting people on board with our 'solution' we haven't communicated with them, and haven't really closed the feedback loop (*'you gave me your opinions, you gave me your feedback, and you were engaged with developing this project, where did I take it?'*). For example, I previously worked with students on a multi-faith-space project. Tensions around faith can be really high, and everyone comes to the project representing their own beliefs and with their own opinions, wanting to see the space working for their roles and their needs. The challenge was that with six faith groups involved, we simply can't accommodate everyone's requests. So I went through a process of actively listening and then proactively managing people's expectations by explaining clearly what is and isn't possible.

> *'I'm sorry, that's not possible, and here's why'*

It has been the *'here's why'* element that has helped us carry those six student representatives through a two-year project, and ensured they continue to attend meetings (and many of us know how hard that is with students). So, keep communicating with people – no one will ever tell you, *'You're communicating too much with me, don't communicate any further'* – it is far more likely that people will feel that they're being left out of the loop!

4.3.5   Speak my language

Of course I don't mean that literally, I mean it figuratively! – understanding what's valuable to them, and communicating accordingly. We often communicate with students and staff, but we're often talking about what *we* think is right or how *we* understand things. For example, students coming to HE in 2020 were born in 2002, and we need to understand how these people function and be able to speak their language. This also applies to staff; more 18-21 year olds are coming into the workforce and I would argue we're not learning how to communicate with them. Emails don't work anymore, and I can give you a good example of this. Most universities send arrivals emails to staff and to students on joining an institution. As a result, we constantly see a drop in engagement with emails that go out from the university – people not clicking through, people not opening them, and certainly not retaining the information conveyed. A simple switch to another platform, Instagram Stories in our

case, solved the problem. It was the absolute hit that people engaged with; Instagram Stories got over a thousand hits in that one-week period at the start of the academic year. This mode of communication said, *'I'm in your world, I'm speaking your language, and it's not about just me getting stuff to you, it's also about you connecting with me*', and giving people that opportunity to come back with information, to ask questions, to engage in the way that works for them I think is really important.

4.4 Challenges

Of course my five top tips didn't come without barriers and challenges, some of which come up against time and again:

+ insufficient time or resources – we're constantly told we don't have enough time or resource

+ lack of responses – sometimes people just 'ghost' you, they just don't want to come back to you, and it's really difficult to send that third *'I'm really sorry but you haven't come back to me'* e-mail. Go ahead – chase!

+ organisational cynicism – just because something hasn't worked in the past doesn't mean it's never going to work, but the, *'We tried this, and it doesn't work*' is quite a barrier that we come up against

+ siloed working and politics

+ vocal minorities – so often you'll have people who are really vocal, and who often have the ear of senior leadership, despite being a minority within your demographic. They believe something really strongly but they're not the majority, and they're not representing the majority of the students or staff. This can be quite a challenge

+ money – it is often deemed too expensive to innovate, to invest in new systems and platforms, and spend money on Instagram, Facebook promotions, and thinking in a new way

+ no common goal or motivation – this is the biggest one on my list; people often have so many different goals from that one project, that one development, that we can never align each other.

My main message to you is bringing people together and getting people aligned on a project is probably the strongest thing you can do for both students and staff.

5. The Motivating Power of What We Hold Dear

5.1 Author biography

Jim Longhurst is Professor of Environmental Science and Assistant Vice Chancellor (AVC) for Environment and Sustainability at the University of the West of England (UWE) Bristol. In his AVC role Jim leads the University's sustainability agenda ensuring that sustainability considerations are present in the University's teaching, research, campus operations and civic engagement work. In 2019 he led the development of UWE's innovative Climate Action and Sustainability Strategy. He has nearly 35 years' experience of research leadership, specialising in air quality and carbon management, and has published over 250 papers, book chapters and edited works. His national roles include Vice President of the UK Institution of Environmental Sciences, Honorary Vice President of Environmental Protection UK, Director and Trustee of the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC), and Director of the Bristol Green Capital Partnership CIC. Recently he was appointed the EAUC Commissioner for the Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education Leaders and has accepted an invitation from the Mayor of Bristol to co-chair Bristol's Advisory Committee on Climate Change. The common thread linking his work is a passion for the environment and a desire to share knowledge, build partnerships and to help shape a more sustainable future.

5.2 Reflections on motivation

When I was invited to contribute to the Advance HE event looking at the thematic challenge of motivation it prompted me to think deeply about the question and to reflect on why and how I am motivated to do what I do, and how motivation contributes to institutional success, and prepares the next generation for working and leading in HE. I'd always assumed that my passion for and about the environment was the principal motivation for my career as a researcher, an academic and a senior manager.

I was motivated for and about the environment by the Torrey Canyon disaster in 1967[2], when an oil tanker ran aground in Cornwall where I grew up. The devastation that this event caused has never left my consciousness, and that has motivated me in my academic career. I am very proud to be an environmental scientist, and my concern in my academic career has always been *'How do I share and raise that consciousness about the*

---

[2] www.itopf.org/in-action/case-studies/case-study/torrey-canyon-united-kingdom-1967

environment?' However, the question posed about motivation in my roles in HE more broadly caused my reflection and I asked myself:

> *'What motivates me in my academic and leadership roles, is it fixed, has it changed over time, are there different motivational drivers, and if there are how do they interact with one another?'*

These are difficult questions, and clearly some are more dominant or important. So I asked myself the follow-up question:

> *'How do I find out about this?'*

I, of course, turned to Google and put the word in, and it told me some interesting things. As an air pollution scientist, in my research community, we don't really talk about motivation; after all, this is the alien language of psychology and business, not 'hard science' where we talk about concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO_2) or nitrogen dioxide (NO_2)! Thus, air quality management in Bristol or in Delhi really does motivate me. It's that passion about what those things are and what they mean that has always driven me to do what I have done; sometimes successfully and sadly quite often unsuccessfully.

So, what about motivation more broadly, away from my research specialism? I read that motivation is the experience of desire or aversion[3]. Aversion, our *negative* reaction to things, is interesting in this context, since it is a counter to our *positive* desire(s). I also came across *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivations[4]. The former are things that are within you, that drive you as an individual to actually behave, that get you out of bed in the morning, and that interact together to enable us to really feel that we're making a difference. These contrast with extrinsic factors – motivations such as fame, money, grades and praise – things that are done *to* you. I also found that there is a third type of motivation, which I suppose, when you think about it, is quite obvious, which relates to *addiction*.

The key is to reflect on how these may or may not influence and motivate us. Business literature seems to focus entirely on motivations that are to do with money and the way people could be cajoled: how you are *made* to, how you are *forced* to, how you are *given rewards* when you have succeeded or *penalties* when you have failed. It's a sort of fear motivation, which, when you think about it, is a terrible way to motivate people when there are so much better ways (some of which are very helpfully highlighted in this publication).

This research into motivational theory started to get me thinking again about me and about things that I have done, and things that were important to me; subsets of my environmental passion that are all about working with people, helping people to develop, seeing people do things that they perhaps at first didn't think they might be able to do. All of those are really important motivators for me, but I don't think they were always there at the beginning. If I look at my own career, if I go back to being an undergraduate or a Masters student or a PhD student, there was always a fear of failure which on reflection was quite a powerful

---

[3] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motivation.

[4] www.leadership-central.com/types-of-motivation.html.

motivating force for me; that underlying *'I don't want to fail'* thought. However, I don't think that holds true as your life course develops. As you move into different positions, as you gain more autonomy, more independence, more capability to shape the world around you, you take failure as part of what it is that is the thing we call life. Some things are successful, some things fail, but you learn from those failures; as long as they're not catastrophic and don't do harm to others, or to the environment as well in my instance.

> *As long as those failures are learning points they of themselves are motivational factors and we shouldn't forget that fear of failure can be very important.*

But let's not pretend that it is enough. There is a whole package of other factors that, as I reflect on what I have read and what I've experienced in my life, I just hadn't thought about in a way that I'm now doing. Being 'forced' to consider motivation so explicitly through my participation in this Advance HE event and publication also highlights that *force* is another motivating factor! It may be an *extrinsic* motivator, but it's made me think about the *intrinsic* things and they are far more important; the values I hold, my ethics – things that really do motivate me.

The dominant extrinsic force though that motivates me is the sheer and utter damage that we consciously and sometimes unconsciously have done to the environment, and I will never, ever lose that feeling of sheer anger and annoyance (two other powerful motivating forces by the way!) that we consciously do these things. For example, we should, I believe, all be angry about recent headlines about the way the ocean has warmed in the last decade, and particularly in the last year[5]; you should be angry about that and you should feel a very powerful motivation about that, because that is something that isn't an accident. It is a change that we have consciously caused as a global society, and for me that anger and desire to change those sorts of behaviours is really important.

That links then into my teaching career, my research career, and the way I am now, an individual in an institution where I have autonomy, agency and the leadership opportunities to actually help a whole generation of students benefit from higher education, and to understand *their* agency as it develops over their academic career for when they go out in the world. Graduates today will on average have 60 years[6] in which they can do good things, and it is very important that we as academics, and our institutions, provide the opportunities for them to understand and effectively mobilise that agency. That for me is a really powerful motivator – I'm going to take every opportunity available to me to help our student body understand what they can do, and what they shouldn't do, and hopefully we can begin to repair some of that environmental damage we have caused as a species. The desire to actually repair is perhaps a motivational force as well, since the repair and management of damaged environments is something that we cannot avoid. We're going to

---

[5] www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jan/13/ocean-temperatures-hit-record-high-as-rate-of-heating-accelerates.

[6] www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/lifeexpectancies/bulletins/nationallifetablesunitedkingdom/2015-09-23.

live in a world of change, so we'd better be adaptable and a conscious understanding of adaptability is something also that should motivate us as well.

In summary, I think I have a set of motivational factors that are all about altruism. They are about being part of and about sharing those things that I hold dear, and trying to understand why others don't. That really matters to me and remains the major drive for what I have done, what I hope to continue to do, and why I'm heavily involved in a whole range of things at the moment that are all about how we might be able to mitigate some of the terrible circumstances we find ourselves in. I'm very proud to be involved in a national activity to bring the further and higher education sector together around the climate emergency. The students that are coming through our institutions now are going to live in a very changeable world and it's our fault, so we'd better try and reduce the risks, and risk reduction is my final motivation factor.

6. Linking Core Values to Motivation

6.1 Author biography

Robiu Salisu is a HE practitioner with several years of experience in student engagement. He is currently the student inclusion officer responsible for improving Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Undergraduate Students' experiences and inclusion at the University of Bristol where he provides institutional BAME guidance for staff and students. Robiu manages the *Be More Empowered (BME) for Success* programme, which employs twenty four student advocates to help make a difference to the experiences of BAME students. He aims to link motivation to good feelings and the importance of questioning the values the individual self holds. In 2019, Robiu was awarded the University of Bristol Staff Member of the Year award for his work in supporting BAME students at the University.
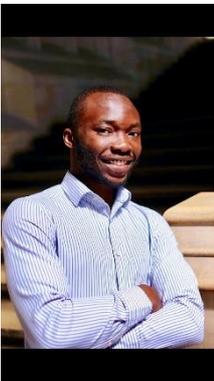
"If we can get to the place where we show up as our genuine selves, and let each other see who we really are, the awe-inspiring ripple effect will change the world."

Terrie M. Williams (activist and philanthropist)

6.2 Introduction

I believe that if you can connect the work you do to your values, even in a small way, you can change your game, and you can change everything that you do.

So, I always find ways to add my values in any situation that I'm in or in any work or programme that I run. For example, when I talk about the work that I do I don't just say *'I work with students and staff'*, I say, *'I improve the experiences of our students and staff through* inclusive *practice'*. Thus, one of my core values, inclusivity, becomes part of the narrative. Or when someone asks me, *'What did you do over the weekend?'*, I don't just say *'Oh I went to see my niece and nephew'*, I say, *'I had* fun *with my nieces and nephew'*, introducing another of my core values, fun. (I'll explain how I've identified my core values shortly.) It's really important that we use positive, feel-good language, because that makes

us find our motivation faster, and the most important thing you can do to achieve this is to know your core values.

6.3 My values

So what are my values? For me, after some soul searching, I narrowed them down to five: freedom, inclusive/inclusivity, appreciation/being appreciative, spirituality, and having fun.

+ live in **freedom**

+ be **inclusive**

+ show **appreciation**

+ connect **spiritually**

+ have **fun**.

6.3.1 Freedom

The *Be More Empowered (BME) for Success* programme that I run is an initiative that I developed when I started my role at the University of Bristol. It allows me to work with a wide range of people within the University, including academic and professional services staff, students and those working in the Students' Union. It gives me a lot of freedom in terms of my personal life as well. I commute to Bristol from Newport every day, and the freedom of being able to work flexible hours is really beneficial for me. When I was applying for my current job, that was one of the things that I really liked about the role; it had this freedom, and that was one of my motivating factors to apply.

6.3.2 Inclusive/Inclusivity

The next motivational value for me was the role title; it's called 'Inclusion Officer' and is focused around the BAME student experience. So, this is something that really is a driving factor for me, because I believe that we should live in a just, equal society. My role, and the programme that I run, specifically looks at the BAME student experience and readdressing the issues around, and the contributing factors in, attaining that. The programme focuses on three main areas: belonging, events and reviewing[7], and integral to it is the value of inclusivity, which allows me to be able to get up in the morning, really love my job, and to see it as the best job in the world because it links directly to what I hold as a core value.

6.3.3 Appreciation

Showing appreciation goes a long way for me, both as a personal motivator and also as a way of motivating others, because I believe that if you see someone doing good you should commend them, and show appreciation for the good that they've done. This works really

---

[7] www.bristol.ac.uk/bame

nicely in terms of the staff that I come across in my role; I often work with academics who sometimes don't see this as important, so trying to win them over, using a carrot rather than the stick, and showing appreciation for the time that they give to come to your workshop, is really beneficial. This might seem really small (why should you have to pander towards them?). However, showing your appreciation is really important because, for some of them, this is a completely new area of work for them, and I use it as a way to motivate other people and to bring them on board in initiatives that they might not necessarily be familiar with.

6.3.4   Spirituality

You might wonder how this links in with my role, and with motivation more broadly. I'm a practising Muslim, so that means I have to pray five times a day. The aforementioned freedom offered by my job allows me to have the flexibility to pray in my working day. I actually calendar prayer times, so I'm able to allocate time for my prayers, and hence spirituality, which again keeps me motivated. I'd hate to do a job which I don't have the space to be able to pray within my working day; because I'm busy working all day my prayers motivate me to carry on and fulfil the role to the best that I can do.

6.3.5   Fun

This is something that is more applicable to the way that I engage with the student body. I've always believed that if you're going to do something you might as well have fun while doing it! I work with our students to ensure that they're not just fulfilling their roles as advocates but they're having fun whilst doing so. We have social events where we get together with our advocates and play games such as *Dobble* and *Articulate*, which builds a sense of community in a relaxed environment. Such an approach also engenders a sense that this is not just about the University getting them to do some work for them, but it's actually about the University caring about them and caring about their wellbeing and engaging them in a fun as well as in an important way.

6.4   Identifying your core values

Here is a little exercise which helped me identify my five core values described above. Here's how I did it with additional formal instructions also contained in the figures.

1. look through a list of different words (Figure 1) and select a few which relate to your core values. (If this prompts you to identify anything that isn't on the list that's fine - you can simply add these to your personal list of core values.)

2. narrow your list down into five grouped and themed sections (Figure 2)

3. highlight five key things in each of the sections (Figure 3).

Abundance	Daring	Intuition	Preparedness
Acceptance	Decisiveness	Joy	Proactivity
Accountability	Dedication	Kindness	Professionalism
Achievement	Dependability	Knowledge	Punctuality
Advancement	Diversity	Leadership	Recognition
Adventure	Empathy	Learning	Relationships
Advocacy	Encouragement	Love	Reliability
Ambition	Enthusiasm	Loyalty	Resilience
Appreciation	Ethics	Making a Difference	Resourcefulness
Attractiveness	Excellence	Mindfulness	Responsibility
Autonomy	Expressiveness	Motivation	Responsiveness
Balance	Fairness	Optimism	Security
Being the Best	Family	Open-Mindedness	Self-Control
Benevolence	Friendships	Originality	Selflessness
Boldness	Flexibility	Passion	Simplicity
Brilliance	Freedom	Performance	Stability
Calmness	Fun	Personal Development	Success
Caring	Generosity	Proactive	Teamwork
Challenge	Grace	Professionalism	Thankfulness
Charity	Growth	Quality	Thoughtfulness
Cheerfulness	Flexibility	Recognition	Traditionalism
Cleverness	Happiness	Risk Taking	Trustworthiness
Community	Health	Safety	Understanding
Commitment	Honesty	Security	Uniqueness
Compassion	Humility	Service	Usefulness
Cooperation	Humor	Spirituality	Versatility
Collaboration	Inclusiveness	Stability	Vision
Consistency	Independence	Peace	Warmth
Contribution	Individuality	Perfection	Wealth
Creativity	Innovation	Playfulness	Well-Being
Credibility	Inspiration	Popularity	Wisdom
Curiosity	Intelligence	Power	Zeal

Figure 1. From the list above, choose and write down every core value that resonates with you. Do not overthink your selection. As you read through the list, simply write down the words that feel like a core value to you personally. If you think of a value you possess that is not on the list, write it down (adapted from taproot[8]).

Abundance	Acceptance	Appreciation	Balance	Cheerfulness
Growth	Compassion	Encouragement	Health	Fun
Wealth	Inclusiveness	Thankfulness	Personal Development	Happiness
Security	Intuition	Thoughtfulness	Spirituality	Humor
Freedom	Kindness	Mindfulness	Well-being	Inspiration
Independence	Love			Joy
Flexibility	Making a Difference			Optimism
Peace	Open-Mindedness			Playfulness
	Trustworthiness			
	Relationships			

Figure 2. Group all similar values together from the list of values you just created. Group them in a way that makes sense to you personally. Create a maximum of five groupings. If you have more than five groupings, drop those least important.

Figure 3. Choose one word within each group that represents the label for the entire group.

Again, do not overthink your labels – there are no right or wrong answers. You are defining the answer that is right for you.

So, for me, in the first section, freedom was the one that stood out the most, inclusiveness in the second etc. I think it's really helpful, because once you know your values, then you know what the driving forces are in whatever you're involved in, be it in your job or your day-to-day interaction with people. Further, you can apply them to any situation. That is what works for me, and it allows me to apply my values and be motivated in any scenario. I even applied it to my invitation to speak at the Advance HE *Puzzle of Positive Motivation* event which led to this publication; immediately I was thinking *'Okay, this is applying my* inclusivity *value, because I want to share good practice with people within the HE sector and I think this is a really important area of work, helping people to find what motivates them to get the best from their roles'*.

So, think about what values you hold dear and how do they motivate you in your day-to-day life' – it works for me!

AdvanceHE

Contact us

General enquiries

+44 (0) 3300 416201
enquiries@advance-he.ac.uk
www.advance-he.ac.uk

Media enquiries

+44 (0) 1904 717500
communications@advance-he.ac.uk
www.advance-he.ac.uk/contact-us

🐦 in f @AdvanceHE

Advance HE enables excellence in higher education, helping it shape its future. Within the UK and globally, Advance HE supports institutions in the areas of excellence in education, transformative leadership, equity and inclusion and effective governance. This is delivered through membership benefits (including accreditation of teaching, equality charters, research, knowledge and resources), programmes and events, Fellowships, awards, consultancy and enhancement services and student surveys.

Advance HE is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales no. 04931031. Registered as a charity in England and Wales no. 1101607 Registered as a charity in Scotland no. SC043946. The Advance HE logo should not be used without our permission.

To request copies of this report in large print or in a different format,

please contact the Marketing and Communications Team at Advance HE:

+44 (0) 3300 416201 or publications@advance-he.ac.uk