

EXCERPT #2

Butler, R. (1988). Enhancing and undermining intrinsic motivation: The effects of task-involving and ego-involving evaluation on interest and performance. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 58(1), 1-14.

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Recent research on intrinsic motivation has consistently found that rewards undermine subsequent interest for initially attractive tasks, apparently by promoting attributions of task engagement to the reward rather than to pleasure in the activity itself...

A somewhat clearer picture of intrinsically motivated activity seems to emerge from the approaches of deCharms (1968) and Nicholls (1983, 1984). Both authors distinguish between extrinsic, task-involved and ego-involved motivational orientations according to their characteristic foci of attention—on external goals, mastery and self-worth respectively. Intrinsic, or task-involved, motivation is characterized by the concern to improve mastery vis-à-vis task demands and/or prior performance and should be maintained as long as the task is perceived as relevant to the ongoing development and assessment of individual mastery (Nicholls, 1983, 1984). Bandura too emphasizes the role of information seeking about competence in maintaining self-regulated motivation (Bandura and Schunk, 1981; Bandura, 1982)...

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The results confirm the importance of distinguishing between task-involvement and ego-involvement when investigating intrinsic task motivation. As hypothesized, both high and low achievers who received comments continued to express high interest both on Session 2, when they anticipated further comments, and at post-test, when they did not. Similar patterns were received also for their performance on both convergent and divergent tasks. Additional findings that interest was slightly higher at post- than at pre-test, that performance on both tasks was considerably higher at post-test and that later interest was highly correlated with initial interest provided further support for the prediction that initial task-involvement would be maintained in this condition.

In contrast, it was hypothesized that normative grades would cause a shift from the initial task-involved orientation at pre-test to an ego-involved orientation in later sessions, not only when grades alone were provided, but also when these were given in conjunction with task-involving comments. As hypothesized, in both conditions, initial interest was less predictive of interest on both later sessions than after comments. In addition, the results confirmed the predictions that immediate interest and convergent thinking would be maintained for high achievers and undermined for low achievers, and that both immediate divergent thinking and subsequent interest and performance on both tasks would be undermined at both levels of achievement. Thus task-involving feedback does seem to have different effects on both interest and performance than ego-involving feedback. In addition, while many teachers seem to feel that any negative effects of grades can be ameliorated by adding a personal comment, the above results suggest that this practice will induce an ego-involved orientation. This suggestion was further supported by the finding that pupils did indeed tend to recall the grade rather than the comment.