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PAPA 5315 Government Administration I: Behavioral Skills  
Midterm Essay Examination

The following is my response to the question:

“Describe in detail a management scenario from your own experience where the motivation of an employee/student was a factor (the employee/student can be you, but does not have to be). Choose three motivation theories from the literature, describe how they might apply in your scenario, and argue how their application by a manager might lead to different results in the employee/student’s behavior. You should attempt to be as thorough as possible about the thought processes behind any given theory’s application and the perceptions/attributions of the parties involved. Note: not all resultant changes in behavior are required to be positive, so you very well might describe how the application of a specific motivation theory could lead to undesirable or negative consequences in behavior.”

The literature I used to answer this question was *Managing Human Behavior in Public and Nonprofit Organizations*. This work highlights my ability to apply theory to real-life scenarios rooted in my own experiences.

## **Question Response**

### **Motivation Theory**

The motivation of employees is crucial to the success of an organization. Without motivated employees, an organization, whether its public or private, will not survive. Motivation is “critical to our own personal success...the more motivated we feel to do our best, to accept new challenges, and to help others accomplish their goals, then the more satisfied and successful we will be in our own work,” (Denhardt, et al., 2019). In my personal experience, my level of motivation has affected my attitude, work efficiency, and the quality of my work. When I am acknowledged, encouraged, and supported, my motivation increases, and I am more likely to be efficient and produce high quality work. However, I am not motivated if I do not feel like my work is necessary or if I am working in an environment that increases my stress levels.

Unfortunately, when I reflect on my motivation at previous jobs, I am reminded of more negative experiences. Throughout my undergraduate career at Virginia Tech, I worked as a waitress and later as the Assistant General Manager in a popular, upscale, Blacksburg restaurant. In these roles, I thrived off the fast pace of a busy Friday night in the restaurant, between running around with orders and ensuring guests were enjoying their experiences. I loved waiting tables when I was completing my undergraduate degree: the money was great, the occasional networking with tables was great, and the free food was amazing. The General Manager often praised me for my high sales, positive attitude, and natural leadership with the other servers. I was proud when I received my promotion to Assistant General Manager, knowing I worked hard for this recognition. The summer between finishing my undergraduate degree and starting the MPA program, my motivation for my job suddenly changed. As my close friends from the restaurant moved away to start their graduate programs, I began losing some of my love for the job. As the General Manager become critical that I was not selling enough, I started dreading coming into work and occasionally cried in my car. I became bitter, at least internally, when speaking to tables and did not enjoy the same job that I used to. In my role as the Assistant General Manager, I was often stressed around my coworkers and easily frustrated when they did not listen to instructions about closing the restaurant. When I started my MPA, was motivation to work in a restaurant significantly decreased and I was burnt out. Reflecting on my past role as an employee, manager, and my interactions at work, there are 3 theories that can be used to evaluate my demotivation. These theories are Need, Expectancy, and Goals.

### **Need Theory**

I first began working at the restaurant in Blacksburg to fulfill my needs. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs or "the needs that motivate human behavior.... moving from the bottom...to

the top of the pyramid [are]: Physiological, Safety, Love, and Esteem,” (Denhardt, et al., 2019). By waiting tables, I was able to pay my rent, live and work in a safe neighborhood, strengthen relationships with my friends at the restaurant, and gain self-confidence through constant public speaking. I was at the top of the Hierarchy of Needs. However, as time went on at this restaurant, my Esteem needs or the “desire to have the recognition and attention from others that support positive self-esteem,” began to falter (Denhardt, et al., 2019). I was not being fulfilled personally or professionally, leading to my demotivation in the job.

### **Expectancy Theory**

My overarching incentive when I was waiting tables was to graduate with 2 Bachelors’ degrees in 4 years from Virginia Tech. Along this path, I became enticed with promotions and subsequent pay increase from server to Assistant General Manager. I was truly motivated by Expectancy Theory or the “[expectation] that [my] efforts will result in a desirable outcome,” (Denhardt, et al., 2019). I put in above and beyond effort in both school and work and was rewarded with the expected outcomes of graduation and a promotion. However, after getting to my desired outcome, I no longer felt motivated in my work. I had reached a peak at my job and did not feel professionally fulfilled anymore. My expectations for management fell flat, and I did not enjoy coming to work anymore.

### **Goal Theory**

Similar to using Expectancy Theory, I set goals for myself to stay motivated at school and to gain a promotion. Goal Theory “assumes that behavior is purposeful, or goal directed,” (Denhardt, et al., 2019). At the beginning of working in the restaurant, I set goals to sale X amount of wine or Y number of entrées in an evening. I was encouraged when I surpassed those goals. When clientele varied or the night would be slow, I did not hit those goals and ultimately

felt I was on a downward streak. The General Manager would point out these shortcomings, ultimately contributing to my demotivation.

### **Different Outcomes**

If I had realized what would have influenced my demotivation sooner, both the General Manager and I could have taken steps to prevent it. I could have realized that all my needs were not being fulfilled, address the discrepancies, and asked to be more positively recognized.

Expectancy Theory and Goal Theory could have been used to better recognize my goals and set new ones as I completed them.

### **Reference:**

Denhardt, R. B., Denhardt, J. V., Aristigueta, M. P., & Rawlings, K. C. (2019). *Managing Human Behavior in Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (Fifth Edition). SAGE, CQ Press.