

Scoring Motive Imagery in Speeches, News Conferences, and Interviews¹

David G. Winter
University of Michigan

This paper briefly explains how to score achievement, affiliation-intimacy and power motive imagery in speeches, news conferences, interviews, and other partly-imaginative written material. It is designed as a general introduction, e.g., for students in psychology courses. It is not adequate for scoring for research purposes. In such cases, the full scoring manual and practice materials² should be used.

Using the Scoring System

The individual sentence is the unit of scoring. In principle, any sentence can be scored for motive imagery, but there are three rules:

- (1) A single sentence can be scored only once for any particular motive imagery, although it can be scored for imagery of two or more different motives.
- (2) If imagery for the same motive occurs in two separate but consecutive sentences, score only once. If it also occurs in a third consecutive sentence, then score first and third sentences (and so forth).
- (3) However, if the same motive appears in two consecutive sentences with imagery of different motive in between, then score both occurrences.

These rules are intended to distinguish between imagery that is repeated to clarify from repetitions that indicate great concern with a particular motive.

To calculate motive imagery scores, first total the number of images for each motive in the text. Then count the total number of words. For each motive, divide the total of images by the number of words, and multiply the result by 1,000 to calculate images per 1,000 words. Since these scores partly depend on the type of document scored, it may be useful to standardize them on a population of similar documents.

¹ For a full account of the method used to develop this scoring system, see the following:

Winter, D. G. (1991). Measuring personality at a distance: Development of an integrated system for scoring motives in running text. In A. J. Stewart, J. M. Healy, Jr., & D. J. Ozer (Eds.), *Perspectives in personality, Vol. 3, Part B: Approaches to understanding lives* (pp. 59-89). London: Jessica Kingsley, Publishers.

Winter, D. G. (1998). "Toward a science of personality psychology:" David McClelland's development of empirically derived TAT measures. *History of Psychology, 1*, 130-153.

² Winter, D. G. (1994). *Manual for scoring motive imagery in running text, Version 4.2*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Department of Psychology.

Achievement Motive Imagery

Achievement Imagery is scored for any indication of a standard of excellence. Such standards are usually expressed in one of five ways:

1. **Words that positively evaluate performances** (or the outcomes of performances), such as “good,” “better,” or “best.” Example: “She wanted to find a better way.”

2. **Goals or performances described in ways that suggest positive evaluation.** For example, an action could be described as thorough or careful, where thoroughness or care clearly contribute to the excellence of the result. Note that working “hard” or even “thoroughly” is scored only when the connection between hard work or thoroughness is clear--when working “hard” (or any other quality of performance) means working well. Examples: “The surgeon had to work fast, without any mistakes.” Here speed and accuracy are relevant to being a good surgeon. “The computer programmer developed an efficient program.” In the following example, however, the connection between hard work and excellence is not so clear, and so Achievement Imagery is not scored: “The man’s car broke down, and he has spent a long time trying to fix it.” (Spending a long time here doesn’t necessarily mean doing a good or efficient repair job.) Since this example suggests concern with a task rather than with excellence, it is called “task imagery” instead of Achievement Imagery.

3. **Winning or competing successfully with others**, so long as winning reflects some excellence rather than only aggression or power. Example: “Kate got the highest score on the Medical School admission test.” To be scored for Achievement Imagery, the word “success” or “succeed” by itself is not enough; there must also be a standard of excellence in the outcome. Thus “He wants love, and succeeded in getting it” would not be scored. “They succeeded in defeating the enemy” would only be scored for Power Imagery (see below); but “They overcame great difficulty to defeat the enemy” would also be scored for Achievement Imagery, since success at a difficult task suggests excellence.

4. **Failure, doing badly, or other lack of excellence**, as long as there is some sadness, negative feeling, or trying to do better. Negative feelings about an obstacle to achievement can also be scored. Examples: “He was angry that the bad weather slowed down his time in the race. The following example is not scored, because there is no sign of negative emotion or determination to do better: “Because he didn’t study, he did badly on the exam.”

5. **Unique accomplishment**--any unprecedented, new, unusual, or extraordinary action which is thereby an implicit sign of excellence. Example: “She will discover a cure for cancer.”

Affiliation-Intimacy Motive Imagery

Affiliation-Intimacy Imagery is scored for any indication of establishing, maintaining or restoring friendship or friendly relations among persons, groups, nations, and so forth. Mere connection, association, or even common activities are not enough; there must also be a warm, friendly quality about the relationship.

There are four basic forms of Affiliation-Intimacy Imagery:

1. **Positive, friendly, or intimate feelings toward other persons** (or groups). Terms such as “friends” or “friendship” are almost always scored, as is mention of “unity” in the sense of a warm, friendly connection. Examples: “Two college friends are glad to see each other.” “We wish for friendship between our two countries.”

2. **Sadness or other negative feeling about separation** or disruption of a friendly relationship. The negative feeling must be connected to the affiliation loss that separation entails and not to some other consequence. Example: “He was sad when his friend went away on vacation.”

3. **Affiliative, companionate activities** such as dates, parties, reunions, other social occasions, or just friendly small talk. In fact, two or more people doing almost any activity together can be scored here, if there is a warm, affiliative quality to the activity. (One example of this quality is wandering and non-instrumental talk between people who have some past, present or future relationship.) Examples: “After dinner, everybody sat around chatting and laughing together.”

4. **Friendly nurturant acts** such as helping, consoling, and so forth, as long as they are done for the sake of affiliation and not only because of duty or role obligation. Affiliation-Intimacy imagery can be inferred from a sympathetic concern for the plight or peril of other people. Not all help involves affiliative feelings; sometimes help involves only power.

Power Motive Imagery

Power Imagery is scored for any indication that one person, group, institution, country, etc. has or wants to have impact, control or influence on another person, etc., or the world at large. There are six basic forms of Power Imagery:

1. **Strong, forceful actions that inherently have impact on others**, such as attacks, assaults, threats, accusations, chases, insults, exploitation, taking advantage of, gaining the upper hand, demanding, having a major effect on others’ lives, and so forth. Examples: “We can certainly wipe them out.” “The company representative criticized the manager.” Wholly routine actions (such as a teacher teaching) are not usually scored, but they can be scored if the extent of their impact on others is elaborated, as in the following example: “The teacher was trying very hard to get his point across to the class.”

Under this criterion, words such as “oppose” or “reject” are not necessarily scored, since opposition or even rejection could be an attempt to avoid others’ impact than to have

impact one's self. "Oppose" can also mean an inner feeling rather than any actual opposing action. Thus concerns with autonomy, controlling one's own destiny, not accepting interference, etc. are not by themselves scored under this criterion, unless there is additional evidence of the concern for impact. Phrases such as "condemn," "resist," "reject with contempt," or "vigorously oppose" are scored for Power Imagery because they show this concern with own impact.

2. **Control or regulation**, especially through gathering information or checking up on others. Example: "The reporter is trying to get the lowdown on the politician." Wholly routine activities, such as "The teacher is checking whether students have their lunch-boxes," are not scored.

3. **Attempts to influence**, persuade, convince, make a point, argue, and so forth, so long as the concern is to affect others and not to reach agreement or avoid misunderstanding. Example: "A mother is trying to interest her daughter in using the computer."

4. **Giving help, advice, or support that is not explicitly solicited**. Either specific assistance or more general support can be scored, so long as the element of nurturance and help is prominent. (Many cases will also be scorable for Affiliation-Intimacy Imagery if the help involves warmth.) Teaching is scored, unless it is a wholly routine description of a classroom situation. "Support" in the sense of concrete help is scored; but "support" in the sense of mere agreement with someone else is not, because there is no impact.

Help, advice, or support must be unsolicited to be scored; Power Imagery is not scored if the help has been asked for. (Of course if help is solicited, but the impact of the help is further elaborated, then Power Imagery could be scored under the first criterion.) Examples: "She is giving advice to the manager." "He is consoling the orphan."

5. **Impressing others or the world at large**; mention of fame, prestige, reputation; and also inner pleasure at one's own glory or prestige (or pain at lack or loss of prestige). No specific actions need be mentioned for Power Imagery to be scored here. Examples: "He wants to appear urbane and sophisticated." "Unfortunately, our national prestige is at an all-time low."

6. **Any action by one person, nation, and so forth that arouses a strong (positive or negative) emotional reaction in another person, nation, etc.** The action must be intentional and not accidental, so that accidents or natural disasters are not scored; but the emotional effect need not be intended. Example: "He was enchanted by the violinist's performance."

Be careful about the words "power" and "strength" when they mean "ability" or "capacity." They are not scored, because they do not refer to having an effect on others. Thus the following examples are not scored: "He lost the power of speech." "Reading Shakespeare made him feel strong."

What is the difference between achievement and power? Sometimes the same phrase may be scored for both, but they are distinct and should not be confused. Doing something with excellence is not the same as gaining impact or prestige. In the old saying, “Build a better mousetrap . . .” is achievement, while “. . . and the world will beat a path to your door!” is power. “John finished last and was sad” would be scored for achievement, because the negative emotion relates to a failed standard of excellence; but if John had been “humiliated,” then Power Imagery could be scored because the emotion relates to lowered prestige.