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An Introduction to Achievement Goal Theory

(Nicholls, 1989; Elliot, 1999)

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Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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Outline

- Introduction
- Goal Involvement
- Individual Goal Orientations:
 - Task Orientation
 - Ego Orientation
- Situational determinants:
 - Mastery Climate
 - Performance Climate

Achievement Goal Theory (AGT)

- “Achievement goal theory assumes that the individual is an intentional, goal-directed organism who operates in a rational manner, and that achievement goals govern achievement beliefs and guide subsequent decision making and behavior in achievement contexts”
(Roberts, Treasure & Conroy, 2007)

AGT

- Achievement goals have been extensively studied
 - E.g., Ames, Dweck, Maehr

AGT

- Understanding motivation, requires understanding the function and meaning of achievement behaviour.
- Meaning given through goals
- “The achievement goal determines the integrated pattern of beliefs that undergird approach and avoidance strategies, the differing engagement levels, and the differing responses to achievement outcomes” (Roberts, Treasure & Conroy, 2007).

AGT

- “The overall goal of action in achievement goal theory, thereby becoming the conceptual energizing force, is assumed to be the desire to develop and demonstrate competence and to avoid demonstrating incompetence” (Roberts, Treasure & Conroy, 2007).
- How conceptualize competence/ability?
 - Personal theory of achievement – goal orientation

Task Involvement

- Undifferentiated conception of ability/success
 - No differentiation between luck, task difficulty, and effort from ability.
 - Ability associated with learning through effort
 - So effort = ability (undifferentiated)

Ego Involvement

- Differentiated conception of ability/success
 - Ability seen as capacity
 - Demonstration of competence involves outperforming others
 - High ability is seen by outperforming others or performing equal to others while expending less effort

Perceived Ability

- Less relevant when conception of ability undifferentiated.
- More relevant when conception of ability differentiated.

State of Involvement

- Ego involved
 - Success when outperform other, particularly when can do so with low effort
 - Normative comparison
 - If perceptions of ability low - maladaptive achievement behaviors
- Task involved
 - Success with mastery or improvement
 - Adaptive achievement behaviors

Goal Orientations

- Individual differences/dispositions
- Orthogonal – task & ego orientations are independent

Orthogonal Goal Orientations

- High Task & High Ego
 - High Task & Low Ego
 - Low Task & High Ego
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- Important to consider simultaneous combinations (Roberts et al., 2007)

Hierarchical Model of Achievement Motivation (Elliot, 1999)

- Approach & Avoidance motivation important
 - Dynamic states of involvement influenced by definition of competence and valence of the goals

2 x 2 Achievement Goal Theory

	Approach	Avoidance
Mastery (task)	Mastery-approach: Goal is to master the task	Mastery-avoidance: Goal is to avoid not mastering a task
Performance (ego)	Performance-approach: Goal is to outperform others	Performance-avoidance: Goal is to not be outperformed by others

(Elliot & McGregor, 2001)

Motivational Climate

- Situational determinants of task & ego involvement

Mastery Climate

- Criteria of success and failure are self-referenced and task involving
- Mastery and learning perceived as valued

Performance Climate

- Criteria of success – other-referenced and ego involving
- Normative ability perceived as valued

Where do people perform best?

- Which type of climate is best?
- Performance v Mastery

Practical Applications

TARGET (Ames, 1992; Epstein, 1989)

- Task
- Authority
- Recognition
- Grouping
- Evaluation
- Time

TARGET (Ames, 1992; Epstein, 1989)

- *Task* - design of tasks and activities, focus on learning and developing new skills, minimizing competition and social comparison.
- *Authority*—incorporates athletes' participation in decision-making processes, supporting their sense of participation and self-determination.
- *Reward*—recognizes and acknowledges improvement, progress, and effort, individually and as a team.
- *Grouping*—encourages heterogeneity and mixing of ability levels with cooperation of group members in trying to solve varying problems and challenges rather than competing with each other at any cost.
- *Evaluation*—targets the provision of evaluative feedback around personal and team improvement, alongside quality of the work process, as opposed to who is superior at a given task.
- *Timing*—challenges the coach to give sufficient time for athletes to master and develop without leaving tasks unfinished, as well as the timing of feedback (eg, immediately after seeing target behavior).

TARGET Behaviour	Mastery Climate	Ego Climate
Task	Self-referenced goals, multi-dimensional, varied & differentiated	Comparative goals, uni-dimensional & undifferentiated
Authority	Participants given leadership roles & involved in decision-making	Teacher makes all the decisions
Recognition	Private recognition of improvement, effort and accomplishments	Public recognition of normative ability and comparative performances
Grouping	Small mixed ability & cooperative groups	Ability groups, whole-class activities
Evaluation	Self-referenced. Private consultations with teacher based on improvement & effort	Normative & public
Time	Flexible time for task completion and maximum time to learn	Inflexible time for task completion

(Gray, Sproule & Morgan, 2009)

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