Being the Best – When Motivation Counts

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Motivation

Performance

Capacity to perform

Opportunity to perform

"You can learn new things, but you cannot really change your motor skills"

Agree ______________ Disagree

Innate talent usually is inferred rather than observed!

Tiger Woods was world’s best golfer because of ...

a. ... innate talent
b. ... practice
c. ... luck

"Athletes are born, not made"

Agree ______________ Disagree

Fixed mindset (“entity theorist”) Growth mindset (“incremental theorist”)

Nature vs. Nurture:
In daily life, it is actually a matter of belief.

≈ 50%

Individual differences

Innate talent Development

≈ 50%
Motivation: Key elements

The psychological forces that determine the direction of a person’s behavior, a person’s level of intensity or effort, and a person’s level of persistence.

Direction: What motivates people to play sport?

- Improving skills
- Learning about yourself: physically, mentally, and emotionally
- Having fun
- Love of the sport
- Having positive interactions with others
- Staying in shape and feeling healthy
- Being involved in competition
- Desire to excel
- etc.

Achievement motivation: Direction

What motivates people to perform, or to achieve? When do they feel competent and successful?

- Directed toward a positive outcome (Approach)
- Directed away from a negative outcome (Avoidance)

Mastery
- Directed toward a positive outcome (MAp)
- Directed away from a negative outcome (MAv)

Performance
- Directed toward a positive outcome (PAp)
- Directed away from a negative outcome (PAv)

Mastery-Approach (MAp)
- Outperforming yourself
- Not losing to yourself

Mastery-Avoidance (MAv)
- Outperforming others
- Not losing to others

Performance-Approach (PAp)
- Outperforming yourself
- Not losing to others

Performance-Avoidance (PAv)
- Outperforming others
- Not losing to yourself
Achievement goals and performance: Meta-analytic findings

1. Across achievement domains (work, education, and sports), approach goals (either mastery or performance) are associated positively with performance, whereas avoidance goals (either mastery or performance) are associated negatively with performance.


2. Relative to avoidance goals (either mastery or performance), approach goals (either mastery or performance) enhance task performance.


Achievement goals and performance: Meta-analytic findings

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Should we promote approach goals (either mastery or performance)?

1988 men’s 100m Olympic final (Seoul)

2007 women’s 1500m WC final (Helsinki)
Achievement goals and cheating

**What is cheating?**

Cheating entails the intentional violation of pre-set rules in order to attain an advantage or credit, or to increase the chance of success.

Why do (some) athletes cheat?

- Perceived external pressures to meet high standards of performance
- A desire to excel and to achieve fame
- Fear of failure
- Lack of personal integrity.
- To attain social acceptance
- To keep up with peers
- To further advance in one’s career or to make money
- To please others
- etc.

Achievement motivation: Direction

**Other-directed:**

Cheating may be considered as a viable mean or strategy to reach one’s goal to win, or not to lose.

**Self-directed:**

Cheating is likely to be perceived as meaningless.

Study 1: Are achievement goals related to cheating behaviors?

Vignette study:

- Assessment of individuals’ achievement goals.
- Participants were exposed to vignettes, each describing a situation in which the protagonist had the opportunity to cheat.

For each item, circle either letter “A” or “B”

**In your sport, which goal is most important to you?**

1. **A** To do better than others or **B** Not to do worse than others
2. **A** To do better than I did before or **B** Not to do worse than I did before
3. **A** To do better than others or **B** To do better than I did before
4. **A** Not to do worse than I did before or **B** Not to do worse than others
5. **A** Not to do worse than others or **B** To do better than I did before
6. **A** Not to do worse than I did before or **B** To do better than others

For each item, circle either letter “A” or “B”

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Achievement goals: Prevalence

Overall, 21.2% of the participants chose consistently (a specific goal or no dominant goal) across the three domains.

Study 1: Are achievement goals related to cheating behaviors?

Study 2: Do achievement goals cause cheating behaviors?

Sample vignette:

For an academic course, you have to prepare a report, and the deadline for delivery is approaching rapidly. If you fail to make the deadline, you will have to redo the entire course.

When you search the internet for inspiration, you find a student’s report that meets all requirements. You learn, further, that the student received the highest mark in class for this piece of work. If you copy it, and replace some words and phrases, nobody will ever find out that this work is not your own, and you will probably be rewarded with the highest mark.

Are you going to submit this slightly adapted student’s report?

Study 2: Do achievement goals cause cheating behaviors?

Experimental study:

- An achievement goal is imposed on individuals (“Carry out the task with this goal in mind”).
- Elaborate on your goal: Describe a situation in which you had the same type of goal, including your thoughts and feelings.
Former Olympic chief Jacques Rogge:
“Cheating is embedded in human nature. Therefore, hoping for a drug-free Olympic Games is naïve.”

Achievement goals, performance, and cheating

Conclusions:
1. Relative to avoidance goals, approach goals lead to better performance (and other favorable outcomes).
2. Relative to mastery goal individuals, performance goal individuals are more likely to cheat.
3. Hence, MAp goals rather than PAp goals should be promoted.
4. Because sport settings are likely to elicit or strengthen performance goals, hoping for a drug-free Olympic Games may be naïve indeed.

You are going to run a series of 10k: 5 runs, in a group of 24 persons.

Your performance (10k run in minutes):

- Significant improvement over time

How do you rate your own performance? Please give your mark.

10 (excellent)
9
...
2
1 (very poor)

Main finding
When self-evaluating one’s own performance, social comparison information consistently overpowers temporal comparison information (TOESCI).
How do you rate your own performance? Please give your mark.

1 (very poor)  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10 (excellent)

Can TOESCI be overcome?

How do you rate your own performance? Please give your mark.

Considering your goal to do better than you did before!!!

Practical implication

Coaches, supervisors, and teachers need to structurally emphasize mastery-approach goals and explicitly—and perhaps repeatedly—remind their athletes, subordinates, and students to consider their mastery-approach goal when self-evaluating their performances.