

Achievement goal theory



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Achievement Goal Theory (Nicholls, 1984, 1989) proposes that goal orientations are developed and altered through various socialization processes, including the motivational climate created by parents and coaches (Nicholls, 1989). In order to better understand the influence of motivational climates, it is necessary to understand the concept of the achievement goal theory (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

Achievement goals have been widely researched by Maehr (1980), Nicholls (1984) and Dweck (1986), who have worked individually, but also collaboratively, in an attempt to explain achievement behaviour within sport settings.

As Duda (2001) and Nicholls (1984) demonstrated; whether a goal orientation is seen to have adaptive or maladaptive outcomes, will depend on the ability perceptions of the individual. Ames (1984, 1992) supported this idea, discovering that through a parent's reaction to their child's performance, children will learn what is valued and preferred. Ultimately, this preference will then be reflected in a child's goal orientation and attitudes towards sport and exercise. In addition, when measuring this Ames (1992) commented that it is the child's interpretation of the parental influence rather than the actual behaviour that is deemed most important.

Dweck (1986) proposed goal orientation as a defining feature of motivation. Task and ego orientated performers differ, as different behaviours will need to be adopted for each goal orientation and each environment within which the individual performs. Bartlett, Gratton and Rolf, (2006) agreed that a task orientated performer believes that participation in the activity leads to

enhanced feelings of mastery, enjoyment, satisfaction and interest. In contrast, performers can be described as ego orientated. Smith, Balaguer and Duda, (2006) viewed this as the tendency to judge one's ability with respect to the performance of others and to tie subjective success to the demonstration of superior ability.

Biddle et al. (2003, p. 11) hypothesized that, " As a result of childhood socialization experiences, individuals' goal orientations are expected to be consistent with the perceived goal orientations held by significant others, such as parents or coaches". Therefore, the following study will examine a child's perceptions of the motivational climate created by their parents and illustrate the relationship that this has with a child's attitudes towards sport and exercise participation.

Perceived Motivational Climate

Recently, research has addressed the contention that parents create a motivational climate that influences their children's achievement motivation (Duda and Hall, 2000; Weigand, 1994; White, 1998). The motivational climate is created through a set of behaviours (e. g. rewards, punishment and feedback) from either parents or coaches (Ames, 1992). Similar to the structure of achievement goals, motivational climates can be either task or ego involving. Research suggests that promoting a task climate is related to greater satisfaction (Walling, Duda, & Chi, 1993) and enjoyment (Seifriz, Duda, & Chi, 1992); whereas promoting an ego climate is related to performance worry (Walling, Duda, & Chi, 1993), and low self-efficacy (Nicholls, 1989).

In order to better understand an athlete's socialisation experiences and the way in which these will influence their attitudes towards sport and exercise; it is appropriate to examine the motivational climate created by significant others (Elliot and Dweck, 2005). As well as coaches and peers, parents have an important role to play in understanding their child's motives for involvement in sport; and ensuring that they are supported, by creating the optimal motivational climate (Maffulli, 2001). Horn (2008) developed this idea further, commenting that, no role is more important than establishing the psychological climate in which the child's sports participation will take place.

You have not included Epstein's TARGET research which underpins motivational climate research.

By giving certain rewards, making explicit expectations and identifying the importance of a particular event or competition, significant others structure the sport context so that it becomes task or ego involving (Lee, 1993). This goal structure created by the adult establishes a motivational climate, whereby the development of one goal perspective takes priority over the other (Nicholls, 1989; Roberts, 1992). The motivational climate that is created will vary depending on the parents' view of sport; and ultimately, their dispositional goal orientation. For instance, parents supporting a highly competitive goal orientation, identified winning and being better than other children as most important; whereas parents endorsing less competitive orientated goals placed greater emphasis on their child focusing on getting on with others and being accepted as part of the team (Lee, 1993). Resultantly, if emphasis is placed on effort, improvement, and self-

referenced goals, then a mastery climate develops. In contrast, if emphasis is placed on social comparison, winning competitions, and other-referenced goals, then a performance climate develops. As parents are the most critical social influence on children's development, it is likely that goal orientations are made clear through parents encouraging and rewarding certain actions and involvement in certain activities (Weigand et al., 2001).

Previous studies have examined perceptions of the motivational climate initiated by the coach (e. g. Newton & Duda, 1997; Seifriz et al, 1992; Treasure & Roberts, 1997). The results from these investigations have supported the categorisation of motivation into two distinct climates-being, a task-involving and an ego-involving climate. Include sentence here clarifying task-involving is mastery climate and ego-involving is performance climate and be consistent in your use of terms. Further work in this field has also demonstrated the link between such climates with an individual's adaptive or maladaptive motivational patterns. This is an interesting area of study as the adoption of an adaptive or maladaptive motivational attitude will influence the chosen goal orientation that the child will work under. Current research has reflected that perceptions of a mastery climate are linked with high task orientation, whereas perceptions of a performance climate are associated with high ego orientation.

Socialisation - an influential construct?

Socialisation is a two way interactive social process whereby individuals are exposed to significant forms of information regarding expectations within a particular setting (Bandura, 1977; Greendorfer 1993; Weiss and Glenn,

1992). For instance, parents may encourage their children to partake in a wide variety of sporting activities; in order to emphasize their belief that making friends during childhood is important, and also to stay fit and healthy you must exercise often. In contrast, other parents who are more ego-orientated driven will expect their child to excel within the activity; sometimes adopting a win-at-all costs attitude.

Parents are considered to be the most influential social agent in a young child's life as children spend most of their time within the family unit during early childhood; and parents are usually the ones who will introduce their children into sport and enrol them into sport programmes (Green and Chalip, 1998; Greendorfer, Lewko and Rosengreen, 1996). It is also predicted that during the early years, parents are likely to be present at their children's games and sport fixtures; therefore giving them ample opportunity to express their values and beliefs of sport to their children (Scanlan, 1996). Horn (2004) also demonstrates that before 10 years of age, children regard the feedback and judgements regarding their abilities given from parents, as imperative to their development and progress. However, when they reach the teenage years, children rely more on the feedback given and believes demonstrated by their peers and coaches; now meaning that parents are more likely to support their children with regards to transport and the financial needs of participation (Cote, 1999). This shift in primary sporting influence from parents to coaches and peers, when a child enters their teenage years (Hellstedt, 1995) . This can sometimes increase the chances of a coach-parent conflict but can also confuse the child in who they are supposed to take primary notice of.

Treasure and Roberts (1995) have shown that physical activity and a child's choices towards sports participation are not only influenced by their dispositional goal orientations (e. g. task and ego goals), but also by the actions, beliefs and attitudes from powerful social agents (e. g. coaches, parents and peers). The process of socialisation is powerful in demonstrating parents' beliefs to their child; since, as individuals mature they come to define their own set of values, therefore making a greater number of independent decisions (Dixon, Warner and Bruening, 2008). With this knowledge, it is appropriate to assume that socialisation is most influential during the earlier stages of a child's lifetime (Dixon, Warner and Bruening, 2008). Laursen and Hartup (2002) supported this finding, commenting that, as children enter late childhood (10-12 years); they extend and mature their social relationships with friends, peers and non-family members.

One particular study concept that has been of great use when explaining the process of socialisation is the expectancy-value model (Eccles et al., 1983; Eccles Harold, 1991; Fredricks & Eccles, 2002, 2004). This model does not address the longevity of parental impact as the model has been solely developed and tested for the study of children's (rather than adolescents' or adults') lives. Therefore, this research project will provide a retrospective account of the impact of parental influence on a child's sport involvement. This reflective process will allow findings to be gathered from when the participant first started experiencing parental influence, up until the present day. Conducting a retrospective study may also provide the researcher with the opportunity to predict a time or age range where parental encouragement is no longer influential, as many scholars argue that the

effects of parental socialisation are centred in early childhood (ages 5-12) (Warner and Bruening, 2008). Warner and Bruening (2008) concluded that further research should examine an adult's perspective of their parents' impact on their sport beliefs, values and participation. The authors maintained that such a study would add value to the literature on parent socialisation. This supports the proposals for the current study, whereby opinions and perceptions will be taken from an adult-child's perspective.

Social Agents - The Parents / Parent-child interactions

Researchers have identified parents as the most critical sport socialization agent for children (Brustad and Partridge, 2002). The majority of research surrounding the parent-created motivational climate has been completed by White (1996, 1998). White & Duda (1993) produced a modification of the Parent-Initiated Motivational Climate Questionnaire (PIMCQ;) (White, Duda & Hart, 1992), named the PIMCQ-2. This 36-item questionnaire records sport and exercise participants' perceptions of the motivational climate created by first their mother, and secondly their father. Subscales question the learning and enjoyment climate, worry-conductive climate and a success-without-effort climate (Jowett & Lavallee, 2007). Of the 36 total items, 18 refer to the mother-created motivational climate and 18 items target the father created motivational climate (Lavoie and Stellino, 2008).

MORE ABOUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND STRENGTHS / WEAKNESSES HERE.?

- yes

Researchers (Horn and Weiss, 1991; Brustad, 1996) have suggested that, as a function of cognitive development, youngsters rely most heavily on

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parental and significant adult feedback to judge personal competency. A large proportion of time in childhood is also spent in the familial context, and children normally have not yet developed firm social contacts outside the family unit (Brustad, 1996). However, with expanding social experiences, cognitive maturation, and improved social skills, children and adolescents spend an increasing amount of time in peer group company, resulting in an increasing reliance on peers to evaluate competence (Horn and Weiss, 1991).

Parents possess a great deal of power when expressing their beliefs, enabling them to sway and alter a youngsters choices by either providing encouragement by a means of transportation to and from sporting venues or by educating the child of the values associated with sport and physical activity. It is these powerful social processes whereby values and norms are transmitted and taught, with the hope that they will then be adopted by the child, which highlights the importance of the process of socialisation (Bandura, 1977; Greendorfer, 1993; Weiss & Glenn, 1992).

Dixon, Warner and Bruening (2008) suggested that in order to determine what attracts children into sport and influences their choices within this domain, the socialisation experiences that youngsters have need to be studied. Thus, an investigation was undertaken to examine the effect of parental influence on women's sport involvement. This study focused primarily on the process of socialisation, using the expectancy-value model to demonstrate their findings (Fredricks & Eccles, 2002, 2004). Results revealed that parents have the most direct impact upon socialisation when a child is young, however this influential power is then passed onto teachers

and coaches during the adolescent stage of a child's development (Anderssen, Wold, & Torsheim, 2006).

Few studies have examined the child's perception of parental beliefs (White, 1996), therefore the current study will focus on the perception of the motivational attitudes and climates that parents create. White (1998) supported this, identifying that it is the perception of a situation or set of behaviours that is more important than the actual situation or behaviour itself. For example, Duda and Hom (1993) examined the perceived and self-reported goal orientations of young athletes and their parents. Results revealed that children who were higher in task orientation, as opposed to ego orientation, perceived their significant parent to be higher in task orientation. In contrast, those children higher in ego orientation, as opposed to task orientation, perceived their significant parent to also be higher in ego orientation. Weigand (1994) found similar results, in a study of children and adolescents in a variety of youth sports. Results revealed that males, more than females, were significantly more ego than task oriented, perceived both parents to endorse more ego than task involvement, and perceived fathers' affective pressure in sport and importance of sport (e. g. pressure to win), to be higher.

Parental influence can have a dramatic effect on ones choices towards sports participation (Fredricks and Eccles, 2002). Past investigations have examined the influence significant others have on children involved in sport and have identified parents as being the most influential (Kelly, 1974; Snyder, 1978). Recent research has also concluded that parental beliefs are consistently

related to young adults' goal orientations (White, Kavussanu, Tank & Wingate, 2004).

Dixon et al (2008) examined parental influence on women's lifetime sport involvement. Semi structured interviews were used to study socialisation and participation over time. Findings revealed that parents are more influential during a child's early youth; nevertheless they maintained that this influence lasts well beyond childhood. The authors also recognised that narrative accounts can often be overly positive or negative as subjects may demonstrate a degree of bias towards their parents. Nonetheless, Dixon et al (2008) believed that parents are one of the most powerful social agents for children. With this in mind a child will act in accordance with their parents beliefs about their potential successes, as they do not want to become a disappointment to them; thus they will place a similar, if not identical level of importance, upon success within that activity (Bois, Sarrazin, Brustad, Trouilloud, & Cury, 2002). This study will seek to identify the links between the parent initiated motivational climate and the child's dispositional goal orientation.

Waldron and Krane (2005) studied the motivational climate and goal orientation in adolescent female softball players, with particular reference to the development and maintenance of such goal orientations. Participants with an average age of 15 years completed the Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire (TEOSQ; Duda and Nicholls, 1992) and The Parent-Initiated Motivational Climate Questionnaire (PIMCQ (; White, Duda and Hart, 1992). Findings showed that children high in task orientation perceived their parents to be high in task orientation and children high in ego-orientation

perceived their parents to be highly ego orientated. This is consistent with other studies' results (White and Duda, 1996; Duda and Homs, 1993), after examining the relationship between goal orientation and the perceived parent-initiated motivational climate. Results reflected that children who were high in task orientation perceived their parents to prefer a climate where learning and enjoyment were most important. However, children high in ego orientation perceived their parents to favour a climate where success was associated with low levels of effort in the learning of physical skills.

Importantly, it has been suggested that; the perception of a situation or motivational climate, rather than the actuality of the situation itself, should receive more attention in future research (Waldron & Krane, 2005; White, 1998). Therefore the current study will aim to examine the perceptions of the motivational climate created by parents, as the influence of parents on athletes' achievement behaviours has not been as widely studied as that of coaches (Waldron & Krane, 2005).

Stressors

In addition to the obvious competition and sport specific stressors affecting athletes, another stressor that can affect youngsters is that of parental pressure (Maffulli, 2001). Hellstedt, (1990, 1995) and Scanlan, (1995); identified both positive and negative aspects of parental involvement. With regards to the positive aspects, parents were referred to as being the main source of encouragement, positive role models and providers of support (e. g. emotional, financial). However, parental support was also viewed at times to be negative, as, parents presented a source of stress through criticism of

performance and financial ‘blackmailing’ based on the financial ‘investment’ made by them. Research has supported that unrealistically high parental expectations (such as pressure, criticism and those mentioned above); have been linked to lower enjoyment, less intrinsic motivation and more stress among young athletes (Lavoie and Stellino, 2008).

Social Cognitive Perspective

The predominant theory used to examine interpersonal influences on behaviour has been social cognitive theory (SCT). Bandura’s (1991) social cognitive theory contended that personal factors (e. g. moral reasoning), environmental factors (parental socialisation) and moral behaviours operate interactively in a reciprocal way (Horn, 2008).

According to SCT, there exists, three primary mechanisms of influence on children’s physical activity choices; these are, role modelling, social influence and social support processes (Welk, Wood and Morss, 2003).

Role modelling has emerged from the research as the most commonly used source of parental influences on physical activity (Anderssen and Wold, 1992; Moore, Lombardi, White, Campbell, Olivera and Ellison, 1991), however the results are mixed, with some studies finding little or no link between parent and child activity habits (Biddle and Goudas, 1996; Garcia, Broda, Frenn, Coviak, Pender and Ronis, 1995).

Despite the fact that it is reasonable to expect that parents who are active may be more likely to encourage their children to participate in physical activity than parents who are inactive (Sage, 1980; Seppanen, 1982); this

topic has received little attention in recent times. Therefore, the current study will seek to establish the strength of the relationship between parent activity levels and sports participation, in correspondence to that of their children.

Previous Research Measures

Much of the previous research has used quantitative measures of study to collect results, therefore the current study will focus on qualitative measures (i. e., interviews) as they offer a more in-depth perspective (Gratton and Jones, 2004) and allow participants to expand and explain their answers to given questions. Through this data collection method it is hoped that the quality of data will be greater as the interviewer can use probes to guide the interviewee to specific answers, allowing for increased precision of responses (REF).

From the literature reviewed, it is clear that the motivational climates created by significant others play a vital role in influencing youngster's attitudes and choices towards physical activity and sport (White, 1998). Therefore, predictions can be drawn that parental task orientated climates will predict athletes' task orientation whereas parental ego orientated climates will predict athletes' ego orientation.

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