Achievement Motivation: It May All Be About Self, After All

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Achievement in its many and varied forms has been, and remains, a topic of continuing concern for societies, institutions, groups, and the individuals who compose them. The factors that result in achievement are many and varied, but it is widely assumed that one of the primary elements in all fields of achievement is motivation. This is true whether it is work, school or sport that is the particular focus of interest. In fact, of course, it is not only employers, leaders and teachers who are concerned with motivation but rather it is all of us in one or another of our life roles. It is, therefore, timely to look again at the factors which act positively or negatively upon motivation. This paper attempts to regard motivation from just such a perspective, with a view to encouraging interdisciplinary discussion of these factors and broadening the discussion to include Self.

The study of motivation has too often tended to focus on one variable as being critical, such as needs, goals, self-concept or self-efficacy, and not stressed a model that comprises a complex of variables. What we have all too seldom considered is motivation as a process. But just what is motivation; what brings it into being, enhances, sustains and directs it? The wide and general usage of the term motivation has in itself suggested multiple meanings and definitions. A convergence of understanding and a broadly shared meaning, however, can perhaps be best attained by anchoring the term closely in observable behavior. Such behavior gives rise to motivational inferences in the research literature. Our review of this literature suggests that motivational research to date has focused on a specific, select set of behavioral patterns that are typically associated with motivation. These may be viewed as behavior from which inferences regarding motivation may be inferred and/or as the inter-subjectively confirmable, behavioral results of the presumed internal or external forces that “cause” motivation. In any event, it is what we “see,” and can objectively confirm that prompts motivational inferences regarding “causal forces,” such as needs, drives, motives and so forth.

Table 1 summarizes the types of behavior that generally give rise to motivational inferences. Note that the behavior listed is divided into multiple categories for purposes of suggesting qualitatively different kinds of behavior that give rise to motivational inferences.

Causes of Motivation: Three Conceptual Paradigms

While there is considerable agreement regarding what needs to be explained about motivation, there is somewhat less agreement on how to explain it. Essentially, three conceptual paradigms have been employed in studying and explaining motivation. They are the individual differences, situation, and person x situation interaction models of motivation.

Perhaps still the most common way of studying motivation for achievement may be labeled the Individual Difference Paradigm. In this case, motivation is viewed as a personal trait exhibited to varying degree by individuals, much as intelligence. It is typically also assumed that it is a relatively stable trait: a pattern of feeling, personal orientation and behavior that is hypothesized to be a disposition acquired in early childhood and retained to substantial degree across the course of development.

Perhaps the most thoroughly developed and applied work in this tradition was that of David McClelland (1985), in which childrearing practices were associated with continuing life patterns. A tour de force in this large literature was a massive cross-cultural study of the achievement patterns of countries around the world (McClelland, 1961). In this particular project, McClelland and his staff tested, among others, a major hypothesis that childrearing experiences, as evidenced in and indexed by the content of school reading books at the age of 10, would in turn relate to economic productivity in the society at a later time when these students could be expected to have moved into leadership roles in that society. Given the complexity and magnitude of the project it comes almost as a surprise that this hypothesis was substantially confirmed. But it was: a relationship was found between achievement themes in commonly used reading texts and economic achievement in the society 25 years later, in most of the societies studied.

While this may represent an important application of the individual difference paradigm in the definition and study of motivation, it hardly stands alone. Indeed, conceptualizing achievement motivation as an enduring characteristic or orientation of individuals, remains a primary feature of motivation research today. While the need-drive conceptions of yesteryear have been largely replaced by social-cognitive perspectives which stress the causal role of concepts of self (see, for example, Bandura, 1977; Dweck, 1999) and purpose (see, for example, Midgley, 2002), the individual difference, trait-centered, paradigm is alive and well. Although a cognitive perspective might have resulted in a greater stress being placed on the situated—even constructivist—nature of motivation, to date it has not. The major change that has taken place during the transition to sociocognitive theories of motivation is the greater use of self-report inventories and questionnaires and the
The ‘Problem’ With Trait Theories of Motivation

“Why is this a problem?” one might reasonably ask. Certainly, acquired and stable characteristics of the individual, such as intelligence, are indeed important characteristics of human nature. Treating motivation as solely or primarily that, however, carries with it certain important limitations in understanding motivational processes. Let alone when this understanding is applied to enhancing the motivation of persons of all ages and cultures in the worlds of work, school and play.

First, it is clear that motivational patterns of individuals do vary with situations and circumstances. This is inescapably evident when primary physiological needs for food, liquid and so forth arise. But it is also evident as so-called secondary or “higher level” needs emerge including, especially, needs for achievement. Granted that we cannot, nor should not, rule out individual differences in pursuing achievement, we also cannot and should not rule out the importance of situation and context in eliciting these patterns. A serious mistake of this nature has been made, and continues to be made, in the study of achievement motivation.

Several decades ago the U.S. was waging a “war on poverty.” In this war the children of the poor and their achievement in schools were often the focus. In many instances, those who were waging this war not only suggested but concluded that these children were not only intellectually, but motivationally, deprived. When their behavior patterns were observed in school settings, they often appeared lackadaisical or lazy, not only lacking any investment in learning or schooling but exhibiting little energy for almost anything—in the school context, at least. Consequently, it was often concluded that this “laziness” was a product of a “culture of poverty,” which not only framed their life style but also produced little or no motivation to succeed or excel—no achievement motivation. But a closer examination of their behavior, especially in extra-school settings, suggested a quite different interpretation. On the streets and playgrounds of their own neighborhoods, these same children not only exhibited the energy they presumably did not have in school but also creative entrepreneurship, concern with succeeding as well as excelling, although perhaps in different ways and toward different ends than those espoused and promoted by the particular culture promoted within the state sponsored schools which they attended. But context clearly made a difference in the motivation levels exhibited; it made a difference to these children’s willingness to accept and pursue reasonable challenge, to persist in the pursuit of excellence—and to ‘be the best they could be’—albeit off-times in something other than tasks of a standard school curriculum (cf. Duda, 1980, 1981; Maehr, 1974b).

Such everyday examples of the situated nature of motivation are offered here, first of all, as a reminder of how motivation does change with situation and circumstance in a way that trait theories of motivation do not lead us to consider. Perhaps it is in the case of the “culturally or racially different” that we are most often likely to be misled when assessing motivation as a trait variable. But just as important is the realization that trait theories of the past, as well as the present, are limited in providing solutions to “motivational problems.” Yet, simply noting that children or adults may be differentially motivated in varying contexts is not in itself a solution to the question of motivation as a problem. Nor is the observation that sociocultural background may play a role in this regard all that helpful. What is needed is a perspective that leads to systematic study and understanding of how, when, and in what ways, situations influence motivation. Just what is it about situations that makes a difference? When and how do they make that difference?

First, it is hard not to recognize cultural variations in achievement patterns. McClelland certainly was not the first to exhibit an awareness of cross-cultural variation in motivation; it was a common observation of explorers and missionaries in previous centuries. These variations are also commonly noted today by teachers, as well as employers, though not often expressed so openly or bluntly as in the past. But a primary, let alone exclusive, focus on the enduring effects of a childrearing context not only has limited utility, but is demonstrably wrong. Parents and teachers regularly report instances of motivation with change in teacher, grade, friends and family circumstances. It is a common observation, although perhaps less often a research focus than it should be, that changes in status, role and age may affect how, where and when individuals invest their personal resources of time, talent and energy in tasks. (see, for example, Maehr, 1974a; Maehr & Kleiber, 1981; Maehr & Nicholls, 1980). All of these cases suggest the need for a situated perspective on motivation. And clearly, if and as the change is undesirable, it is often situation change that is sought to reverse what has happened. Indeed, trait notions of motivation almost seem to suggest that motivation change can occur only as previously acquired traits are undone and replaced: a task likely to be difficult to accomplish in almost any case. Therefore, aside from a compelling theoretical need to attend to the situated nature of motivation, there is an urgent practical reason for looking at motivation from this perspective.

Perspectives for Studying Motivation as Situated

Motivation researchers have, of course, not totally ignored the situated nature of motivation. First, Weiner’s (1986) application of attributional analyses to achievement theory can, and should be, considered as an important example of how motivation arises in context; in this case as a function of causes and effects ascribed to a complex of perceptions. Although
other causal attribution researchers have often treated a perceived locus of control as a distinguishing and relatively durable characteristic of individuals (see, for example, Graham, 1994). Weiner’s work makes it clear that motivation can be, and often is, a construction derived from the perceptions of events in a particular place within a specific time frame. That is, motivation is largely a function of how we perceive causality in a particular context. The question then becomes: Can we affect, control or influence conditions through personal effort or are we pawns of forces outside ourselves?

Additionally and notably, the work on causal attributions also resulted in the emergence of “goal theory” (cf. Maehr & Nicholls, 1980), which resulted in the view that, as individuals perceive that their successful engagement in an activity requires, first and foremost, effort and not just ability, they then invest quite differently than when the outcome appears to be a function of already obtained ability. Subsequently, attention was given to how situation and context is framed and differentially defined, not only the source for success in a particular case, but also the purpose for which the action was taken. There are two kinds of purposes: one is to succeed because one is able, the other is to succeed because one puts forth effort. These purposes are labeled Demonstration of Ability (Performance Goal) or Acquisition of Ability (putting forth effort to improve one’s ability, or Task Goal). The two purposes are an illustration of different contextual stress: either on the importance of ability or on the importance of effort.

And of course, constructivist perspectives have already emerged in the study of motivation and its causes (cf. Hickey, 1997), including especially the construal of ‘approaches to defining Self’ (see, for example, Heinz, 2002; Hoyle, Kernis, Leary, & Baldwin, 1999; Paris, Byrnes, & Paris, 2001; Prentice, 2001). Parallel to this stand social and motivational theories that tend to emphasize the importance of learning to enjoy and experience personal growth, for which a different level or quality of investment is exhibited (cf. Amabile, 1996; Deci & Porac, 1978; Lepper, Keavney, & Drake, 1996; Maehr & Maehr, 1996). While this work is important in contributing substantially to new theory as well as effective practice, it has decided one important element that invariably inserts itself into any situation and significantly determines whether and to what degree an individual will invest in any activity. That element is the socio-cultural context in which the activity occurs. Some may not view this as motivational, but arguably it frames the direction and nature of investment and exists not just as a trait of an individual but as a situated reality vis-à-vis how, when, and to what degree an individual will choose or invest in any course of action.

Re-Framing Achievement Motivation Within a Decision Theory Framework

Arguably, each of these perspectives has contributed in some measure to the current discourse on motivation. However, the field seems to be at a point where some integration of perspectives could be useful. In particular, it might be desirable to move beyond the focus on single constructs or variables such as self and goals and explore how these interact and complement each other in fostering motivation in particular contexts and under selected conditions. In our view, a useful perspective for proceeding along this path is implicit in the earlier work of John W. Atkinson (see, for example, Atkinson, 1957; Atkinson & Feather, 1966) which interpreted motivation in terms of choice and decision theory. Granted, Atkinson never divorced himself from a trait view of motivation, incorporating individual difference measures of Hope of Success (TAT) and Fear of Failure (TAQ) as primary elements in his motivational equation. However, in framing motivation in decision theory terms he suggested a useful outline for constructing a situated perspective on motivation that could now be enhanced through the incorporation of current socio-cognitive perspectives on motivation and achievement.

There are several features of Choice and Decision theory that are important and potentially very useful in this regard. First, a decision theory perspective anchors motivation in specific behavior, a path of action taken when other options can be reasonably assumed to be available. That is, doing one thing and not another. Second, it considers persistence in pursing any chosen action. Moreover, Atkinson’s model, at least in a preliminary way, allowed for analyzing the “quality” of action taken, anticipating more recent interests in studying how purposes not only guide the direction of effort, but also condition how the task is done (see, for example, Maehr & Midgley, 1996; Midgley, 2002). In Atkinson’s case, however, the focus was on the quality of decisions, not so much on whether they were good or bad, but whether or not they represented seeking out challenge or avoiding it. More recently, this kind of “reasonable risk-taking” could be and, to a limited degree has been, applied not only to entrepreneurship (see, for example, McClelland & Winter, 1969) but also to academic “venturesomeness.” This may be evident in how students select courses or class projects (see, for example, Maehr & Midgley, 1996). It could also reasonably be applied to creative endeavors where individuals choose to go against convention or the accepted ways of thinking and problem solving, as in the creation of works of art, as portrayed, for example, in the work of Amabile (see, for example, Amabile, 1996).

While Atkinson thought of decision making largely as determined by personality characteristics, the decision-making paradigm itself need not only be thought of in that way. Without denying the fact that there are individual tendencies likely to influence decisions and actions in idiosyncratic ways, it is important also to consider how the immediate situation conditions decision-making. There is room in the decision making framework for considering action as heavily situated, as suggested by current work in this area (see, for example, Kahneman, 2003). While probability of success and failure may be closely tied to stable perceptions of individuals, for example their sense of competence, there are other features in the decision framework that vary markedly according to situation.
A second point is not so simple: It is possible, and ultimately useful, to cast the concept of self as a, if not the, central variable in a choice and decision theory framework that focuses on the situated nature of motivation. In doing so, we build on, but are not limited by, Atkinson (1957).

In our reading, Atkinson’s model readily leads to three notions about the nature of motivation and its causes. First, motivation is intimately and irrevocably tied to specifiable action: a choice to act in one way rather than another. We would put it this way: (1) Motivation begins and ends with the observation that individuals tend to pursue a particular course of action though other options are available; (2) Further, once a course of action is taken it may continue or persist for varying periods of time and be engaged in with greater or lesser intensity and efficiency (repeated choice); (3) This course of action produces predictable and standard, or non-predictable, perhaps non-standard, creative outcomes. In other words, motivation is anchored in antecedent behavior. It is exhibited in the kind of observations outlined in Table 1.

Antecedents of Motivation

Following a choice and decision theory framework, three immediate antecedents of motivation are central: Action alternatives, sense of competence and purpose, each outlined below.

Action Alternatives

First and foremost, in acting we choose from the set of options that we perceive to be available to us. That is an obvious, but not at all that seriously and fully considered, fact of motivation. Clearly, in cross-cultural work, it is, and must be, central. In earlier research on “subjective culture” Charles Osgood, Harry Triandis and their colleagues (Osgood, Miron, & May, 1975) laid out a strong case for the role of norms, roles, and societal expectations in framing the direction and nature of the action exhibited by individuals. Earlier need-drive models of motivation, indeed, most motivation theories yet today, do not pay sufficient attention to subjective culture as a component of the “motivation equation.” If, and when, sociocultural influences on motivation are considered, such influence is largely viewed in terms of early social learning in which durable motivational predispositions are established; that is, essentially as an acquired, stable and durable trait of the person. Choice and decision theory, however, provides a framework for representing the continuing and immediate effects of sociocultural factors in specific action situations and contexts throughout the life span.

Essentially, the operative norms, roles and social expectations which Osgood, Triandis and their colleagues labeled subjective culture may be viewed as a portrayal of the options from which action choices are made on a regular and continuing basis. A challenge here, of course, is to unpack these perceived options from the complexity of all the variables that compose the subjective culture. But as Triandis and his colleagues have shown that, given the right questions, individuals can describe their “cultural options” readily and effectively.

Building on this tradition, a number of other researchers have specifically examined “Action Alternatives” as important motivation factors across a wide variety of societal groups (see, for example, Fyans, Sallili, Maehr, & Desai, 1983) and in a number of different “organizational cultures” as well (see, for example, Maehr & Braskamp, 1986). Not only do individuals recognize their options regarding how they can and should behave and relate to others within their communities and neighborhoods, they also perceive and can articulate, achievement options: that is, opportunities for learning, self-improvement, marketability and advancement (see, for example, Maehr & Braskamp, 1986). The emphasis has to be on perception and level of cognition, since from other vantage points their options may be inaccurate. But the point is that individuals do act in terms of their perceptions, however objectively correct they might be.

An interesting and perhaps more readily operational way of representing these Action Alternatives is quite possibly to be found in the concept of “possible selves” set forth by Markus and her colleagues (see, for example, Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). While there may be multiple ways to frame possible selves for assessment purposes, it seems reasonable to suggest that the work points to at least one important perspective in assessing perceived action alternatives from which an individual is likely to choose. And thus, an important component of the choice and decision process, we suggest, is the contextual factors that frame the behavior from which we infer motivation.

But the critical point, of course, is that ignoring subjective culture in the study of motivation would be foolish. And to frame motivation in terms of decision making, possibly suggests a convenient way in which the cultural component of action can be incorporated into the immediate context in which action is taken. Somewhat incidentally, or possibly accidentally, early work did find that achievement motivation not only changed with age but as social position and role expectations also changed (see, for example, Klinger & McNelly, 1976; Zander & Forward, 1968). However, the implications of this for a more situated view of motivation were only minimally investigated. The focus remained, and continues largely to remain, on early socio-cultural influences, especially those associated with childrearing as formative in framing enduring Personal Dispositions, perhaps for a life-time. But obviously, culture is always “there” and similarly influential, but not always in the same way throughout one’s life. Indeed, culture is best thought of not only as a continuing, but ever-changing factor in influencing behavior and motivation. It has a continuing effect on how the individual construes situations, shapes and reshapess behavior and motivates him or herself. Arguably, the continuing influence of social and
cultural factors can be better framed as “perceived action options” extant at a point in time, in specific places or social contexts. As such, they play an important role within a choice and decision theory model of motivation.

For measurement purposes, these may perhaps be presented as salient possible (or impossible) concepts of self in a specific action context. While the work on possible selves has heretofore tended to reflect more a trait- rather than a state-oriented conception of achievement orientation, it quite possibly could be re-framed as a situated variable for measurement purposes: for example, “How could I comfortably act in this situation, given my social definition of who I am?” In any event, the interesting and important work of Markus and her colleagues (Markus & Nurius, 1986) can, and should be, explored as an avenue for operationalizing Perceived Options, as defined here. Thus, early work by Klinger and McNelley (1969) found that gender differences varied with age and arguably varied as status and role expectations changed. Complementary to this, Zander and Forward (1968) provided further evidence of this in an experimental study of leadership. In this study, changes from a “followership” to “leadership” role in a group occasioned achievement behavior in those identified as low and as well as high in achievement motivation, using the typical TAT assessment procedures. Unfortunately, the implications of these, and similar studies, did not firmly establish a place for a more situated view of motivation and were only minimally pursued. Socio-cultural options were hardy viewed as a central part of the motivational process. Most often, they were viewed as embedded in early child-rearing practices that led to differing orientations toward achievement and other social action tendencies. Arguably, however, they fit more comfortably into a choice and decision conception which can conveniently incorporate such variation as providing action options (“possible selves”) that are associated with different positions and roles to be played within any given social matrix.

In any event, our suggestion is that perceived action options are a critical component of the motivational process. Moreover, we further suggest that they can be appropriately conceptualized within the framework that Atkinson outlined and which we have elaborated here. Furthermore, we would specifically propose that they may be conveniently and succinctly conceptualized, and effectively operationalized, within a decision framework of possible (or impossible) concepts of Self: “How could I comfortably act or “be,” given my social definition of who I am?”—following the interesting and important work of Hazel Markus and her colleagues.

Sense of Competence
A second antecedent in a choice and decision theory model of motivation is the belief that one is likely to succeed rather than fail at a particular task, in a specific situation. More generally, this may be associated with a sense of competence of self-efficacy vis-à-vis a particular task in a given context. While sense of competence has often been treated as an enduring trait, it need not be. Indeed, one could treat it as a situated variable that is dependent on the task at hand, which was the case in Atkinson’s and other decision theory models of motivation. In any event, in our attempt to stress one’s view of motivation as contextually determined we suggest just this possibility.

The Difference That Purpose Makes
While the essential variables of decision making may be viewed as varied components of Self, these components, individually and jointly, operate differently in the decision making process as situations and circumstances change. Thus, in the last decade or so, considerable research has been conducted on the importance of purpose in encouraging and framing the nature of motivation. This literature is vast and varied (see, for example, Midgley, 2002) and has clearly contributed significantly to the fuller understanding of motivational processes. The many important findings regarding goals cannot be ignored in any consideration of motivation, including this proposed re-consideration of motivation within a choice and decision theory framework.

How Does “Goal Theory” Relate to a Decision Theory Model of Motivation?

Decision making may follow different rules, as also does motivation. While Perceived Options and Probability of Success or Acceptability in pursuing them are crucial, they also figure into the decision making processes differentially, depending on certain conditions. Arguably, decision rules change as purposes change. In most cases, an alternative that offers a high probability of success is likely to be pursued in making a decision regarding your child’s health, but you may be more willing to take a relatively high risk of losing to a better player in a game of tennis. Of course, it is all a bit more complicated than this, but the central point here is that the purpose of a course of action modifies the rules that guide decision making. More specifically, recent research under the label of goal theory has specified a number of different ways in which purpose modifies the way in which we act (cf. Maehr, 1983).

The Power of Purposiveness

From this, it seems clear that having a goal, purposiveness of some kind in acting is, in and of itself, a motivational factor of importance. The extensive work by Locke and his colleagues seems to have made this point abundantly clear. Indeed, there are those who might argue that this may well be the most reliable and readily useable finding of motivation theory and research to date (cf. Locke & Latham, 1984; Locke, Staw, Saari, & Latham, 1981). In a study of multiple organizations and
One of the issues that has captivated significant attention in recent years is the differential effects of different purposes. How individuals invest in a course of action. Much of that work has focused primarily on four goals or purposes: Task/Mastery, Performance, Social and Extrinsic Goals. Each of these goals has been given significant attention in the literature and each seems to have quite interesting and differential effects upon the kind of choices individuals make, as well as the actions and outcomes that follow. We focus here on the two goals that have captured perhaps most of the attention in the last decade or so and played a major role in our work. While variously labeled, we will refer to these goals here as Mastery and Performance goals. Of special interest is how holding these goals changes the actions, particularly the achievement behavior, of individuals. There is substantial evidence that different decision rules are followed when an individual adopts or holds one or another of these goals.

When Mastery Goals are held, individuals are more likely to seek challenge and tolerate, if not actually pursue, what they cannot automatically predict. That is, individuals tend to exhibit a kind of reasonable venturesomeness and/or a willingness to “venture outside the box” in their thinking as well as their acting. Perhaps it may be simply said that they exhibit the kind of “challenge seeking” in thought as well as action that Atkinson implied in his decision theory model of achievement motivation.

In contrast, performance goals seem to lead to a more conservative approach to achievement, one that seems to preserve rather than enhance a sense of self, particularly a sense of competence: that is, choosing to do what one is sure one can do and not risking the embarrassment of losing or failing. Another way, an “Atkinsonian” way, of describing this, is to say that, in this case, the person is more fearful of failing than he or she is desirous of succeeding. But, in addition to the venturesomeness tendency, a number of other achievement outcomes have been associated with Goals which in turn implicate the self to varying degrees, as well (cf. Maehr & Midgley, 1996; Midgley, 2002).

Why Do Mastery and Performance Goals Have Such “Effects”? Early on (see, for example, Nicholls, 1984), it was suggested that Mastery and Performance goals have their effect upon motivation because they differentially prompt a focus on self rather than on task. There is, of course, a considerable literature on self-awareness and much of that literature suggests different outcomes depending upon whether one is or is not aware of who one is. In particular, it may be suggested that an obsession with self may, in multiple different ways, prove to be counterproductive and also debilitating: not only undermining achievement but also interpersonal relationships, health and well-being (Nicholls, 1984). Moreover, one can also cite the “stereotype threat” literature as providing additional examples of how focus on self can be inhibiting or debilitating (see, for example, Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995)

Of course, there is a simpler and more straightforward explanation to the effect that spending time and effort thinking about who one is and what one can do takes away from time to be spent on “doing what needs to be done.” However, there is good reason to believe that, in the consideration of goal effects, especially the differential effects of Task and Performance goals, it all boils down to the issue of how these goals differentially implicate the Self.

Conclusion

So, we reach the point that could be anticipated by the title of this paper: “Motivation is All About Self, After All.” Well, not quite! Actually, while a major point of this paper is to suggest that the Self is critical to the motivation equation, this variable is best cast within a decision theory model that stresses the importance of purpose as well as perceived options.

The study of motivation has too often treated a single variable as primary, such as self-concept or self-efficacy, or on need or goal, and not stressed a model that comprises a complex of variables. Concurrently, we seldom consider motivation as a process. Decision theory once suggested a felicitous combination of critical variables that defined motivation and specified its origins and its variation in manifestations. It may now have different and more obvious relevance as we overwhelmingly view motivation in terms of social cognitive variables rather than in terms of needs, drives, incentives or values. At the very least, we hope that, to some small degree, we have shown how the two motivational constructs that have gathered the most attention in recent years, namely Self and Purpose, (cf. Pintrich & Schunk, 2002) are not only interdependent but cannot be considered apart from other social cognitive processes. Reviving a decision theory model might, just possibly, not only suggest a way of viewing the interconnections of Self and Purpose, but also remind us that action happens within a sociocultural matrix in which norms, roles, social positions, social identity—subjective culture—defines opportunities and limits what we can do, and when and where we can do it.
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References


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<th>Dimension</th>
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<td>Direction</td>
<td>Choice/preference made or exhibited</td>
<td>(Atkinson &amp; Feather, 1966)</td>
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<td>Continuing Motivation</td>
<td>Later and “spontaneous” return to task/activity</td>
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<td>Intensity</td>
<td>Evidence of positive/negative affect, retention of focus, level of activity</td>
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<td>Level of output, when capacity and other variables held constant</td>
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<td>Thoughtful effort/deep processing</td>
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Elaborative Comments on other goals: First it is perhaps reasonably obvious that extrinsic rewards and social recognition can communicate Task and Ego purposes, in some circumstances. The young faculty member who receives a salary increase may interpret this as a sign of professional development, not as a bribe to keep him from moving. A young student too may see tangible rewards as signs of growth and lack of them as a time for self-examination. What the teacher says, even the gold stars grades, or whatever he or she passes out, can focus the student on progress, individual growth and not therewith not distract from learning and development.