PERCEPTION OF SUCCESS QUESTIONNAIRE: PRELIMINARY VALIDATION IN AN ADOLESCENT POPULATION

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Summary.—The purpose of this study was a preliminary examination of the psychometric properties of the Perception of Success Questionnaire among adolescents. The questionnaire was developed to assess dispositional achievement goal orientation. Responses of 96 adolescents (M = 11.3 yr.) suggest that the questionnaire has a stable factor structure and acceptable internal consistency. Analysis assessing the discriminative validity of the task and ego subscales suggests a coherent relationship between the subjects' goal orientation and their beliefs about sport. In contrast to the findings from education, however, where differences in individuals' task orientation appear key, present results suggest that differences in ego orientation may be important in sport.

Although various explanations have been proposed to account for the motivational determinants of children's achievement in sport, recent research stemming from achievement goal theory (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1984, 1989) has focused on the goal-directed nature of behavior. Although not extensive, research in sport settings has also shown that goals organize achievement beliefs (Duda, 1989; Treasure & Roberts, 1994). Two achievement goal orientations, termed task and ego (Nicholls, 1984), have been shown to predominate. When a task orientation is exhibited, perceived ability is self-referenced and dependent on learning or improvement on the task. In contrast, when an ego orientation is displayed, perceived ability is other-referenced and dependent on subjective assessment of one's ability relative to that of others.

To assess individuals' disposition toward task and ego achievement goal orientations, Nicholls (1989) suggested that individuals should be asked what makes them feel successful in a given situation. In line with research in the classroom setting (Nicholls, Patashnick, & Nolen, 1985), research in sport has been directed toward developing measures of task and ego goal orientations. Duda and her colleagues (Duda, 1989; Duda & Nicholls, 1989) have developed the Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire, while Roberts and Balague (1989) have been developing the Perception of Success Questionnaire.

The purpose of this study was to continue the development process of

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3The Perception of Success Questionnaire is available on request from the first author.
the questionnaire by conducting a preliminary examination of the scale’s psychometric properties in a British adolescent population.

**METHOD**

Subjects who were in the first year (mean age 11.3 yr.) at a large public school in a major city in Britain took home a parental consent form in the winter term of 1991 and returned it in a sealed envelope. Approximately 60% of the parents gave their consent for their child to fill out a questionnaire at school. The final sample included 53 girls and 43 boys. The subjects completed the questionnaire during their physical education lesson.

The subjects’ dispositional goal orientation was differentiated by responses on a 12-item scale of six task items and six ego items. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale anchored by strongly agree (1) and strongly disagree (5). The subjects’ beliefs about competitive sport were assessed by four items each rated on a 5-point scale. The first two items asked the subjects what is doing well in sport. The scales for these items were anchored by “winning” and “trying hard,” and “doing as well as or better than others” and “showing personal improvement.” The third item asked what the subject would do if experiencing difficulty in a sport, namely, “find another sport” or “keep trying.” The final item asked why the subject worked hard in sport. This question was anchored by “wanting to win” and “wanting to learn new skills.”

**RESULTS**

*Construct Validity*

The construct validity was examined via principal axis factor analysis with both orthogonal and oblique rotations. Two factors were extracted reflecting ego and task orientations. The intercorrelation between the two factors was .16. A minimum .4 factor weight was required before a specific item was considered to load on a factor. The factor weights ranged from .86 to .66 for the task subscale and from .90 to .72 for the ego subscale. The task subscale had an eigenvalue of 3.23 while the ego subscale had an eigenvalue of 4.46. Combined, the two subscales accounted for 64.1% of the variance in the subjects’ goal orientations.

*Internal Consistency*

The internal consistency of the subscales was determined as Cronbach coefficients. These were .92 and .90 for the task and ego subscales, respectively.

*Gender Differences*

It was felt that the gender of the children may have been associated with the dispositional goal orientation so, keeping the goal orientations of ego and task as continuous dependent variables, we conducted univariate
analyses of variance with gender as the independent variable. No significant differences were found. Consequently, for all subsequent analyses, boys and girls were collapsed into one group.

**Discriminative Validity**

To assess discriminative validity, a top third-bottom third extreme group split was conducted to differentiate high (≥4.7, n = 35) and low (<4.2, n = 28) task and high (≥3.5, n = 29) and low (<2.7, n = 34) ego orientations. The responses of 63 subjects remained after this procedure. We then conducted a 2 × 2 multivariate analysis of variance on the four belief items with high or low task and high or low ego goal orientations as the independent variables. No significant main effect for task orientation and no interaction emerged. A significant main effect did emerge, however, for ego orientation. Follow-up univariate analysis of variance indicated that high ego-oriented subjects (M = 4.2, SD = .7) perceived doing well as winning while low ego-oriented subjects (M = 3.4, SD = .7) believed that doing well meant trying hard (F = 7.36, p < .05). High ego-oriented subjects (M = 3.7, SD = 1.0) also perceived doing well as doing as well as or better than others while low ego-oriented subjects (M = 2.4, SD = .7) perceived doing well as showing personal improvement (F = 2.19, p < .05). Low ego-oriented subjects (M = 4.5, SD = .3) indicated that they would keep trying a sport if they were experiencing difficulty while high ego-oriented subjects (M = 2.1, SD = .6) stated that they would find another sport (F = 10.96, p < .005). Finally, high ego-oriented subjects (M = 4.4, SD = .3) indicated that they worked hard in sport because they wanted to win while low ego-oriented subjects (M = 2.7, SD = .3) wanted to learn new skills (F = 8.53, p < .01).

**Discussion**

Based on these data, it was concluded that the questionnaire had demonstrated acceptable internal consistency and a stable factor structure for this adolescent population. The low intercorrelation between scores on the task and ego subscales also confirmed the proposed orthogonality of the two achievement goal orientations (Nicholls, 1989). In addition, the results suggest a coherent relationship between the subjects' goal orientation and their beliefs about sport. In contrast to findings from education, however, where differences in individuals' task orientation appear key (Ames & Archer, 1988), present results suggest that differences in ego orientation may be more important in sport. Further research is required to confirm the validity of the questionnaire noted in this study and the relationship between task and ego achievement goal orientations and beliefs about sport.

**References**


DUDA, J. L., & NICHOLLS, J. (1989) The task and ego orientation in sport questionnaire: psychometric properties. (Unpublished manuscript, Purdue Univer.)


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