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Achievement Motivation and the Adolescent Musician: A Synthesis of the Literature

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Abstract

Motivation plays a role in nearly all human decision-making processes. Regardless of the situation, little may be achieved without the appropriate harnessing of motivation. The same is true in the music classroom. Research appears to indicate that motivation plays a crucial role in human development and achievement. The achievement motivation paradigm seeks to explain human behavior as a striving for excellence regardless of external rewards. By focusing on student effort, rather than personal ability or comparison with others, the educator may help students gain a mastery goal-oriented perspective of their musical tasks leading to increased use of cognitive strategies, persistence when presented with failure, enhanced task enjoyment, and augmented positive affect.

Introduction

Julie, a 13-year old flute player, began playing her flute in the fifth-grade band at her public middle school three years ago. Today, Julie sat in her chair reflecting upon how she had gotten to this point. Back in fifth grade, Julie's main impetus for joining band was for social reasons. Her brother had played the trombone and, according to her parents, was quite good at it. Moreover, Julie's best friend, Sarah, had chosen to play the flute, so it just made sense at the time for Julie to play the same instrument and sit by her friend in band. Last year, Julie had performed at her regional junior high school solo festival and received a top rating. She had worked hard for months knowing that the competition was going to be fierce (or so her brother and peers in a higher grade had alleged). A low rating would make her look foolish in front of Sarah and her band director; Julie did not want to disappoint either.

On this day, sitting first chair in the statewide honors band, Julie was glad that she had persisted in instrumental music. She was thankful that she had found that little "spark" that had made her want to improve her skills on the flute for her own benefit. Julie loved listening to professional musicians on her portable music device; she even created her own recordings by playing her favorite musical works on her flute so that she could take her performances with her wherever she went. Julie wondered just how much more she would learn on her instrument and imagined that if she worked hard—even though there would be minor challenges to overcome—someday she could play just as well as the professional flute soloist performing in front of the honors band right now.

Motivation is the foundation for human achievement. A psychological construct,

"motivation is considered both a catalyst for learning and an outcome of learning" (Hurley, 1993, p. 17). Without motivation little can be achieved, but with the appropriate inspiration, substantial growth may occur. A study by Cattel, Barton, and Dielman (1972) noted that nearly 25% of student achievement might be attributed to motivational elements. Asmus (1994) suggested that estimates of student achievement that were due to motivation ranged from 11 to 27 percent in the literature. Experienced educators may believe that this percentage is even higher yet.

Motivation takes many different forms and is, in many ways, unique to each person. Ormrod (2004) defined one motivational construct—achievement motivation—as "the need for excellence for its own sake, without regard for any external rewards that one's accomplishments might bring" (p. 438). One of the first writings on achievement motivation was by Murray (1938) who considered achievement motivation to be based upon three fundamental conditions: (a) a need for achievement, (b) an approach motive, and (c) infavoidance (the avoidance motive). While the terminology has evolved over the past 70 years, the basic premises set forth by Murray continue to be maintained. This review of literature will consider the achievement motivation paradigm in regard to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, mastery goals, and performance goals, as well as other motivational concepts germane to the classroom of the adolescent musician.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

A basic underpinning of motivational theory, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are two key terms directly relating to the internal or external nature of a person's motivation. Intrinsic motivation may be viewed as being derived from within the individual or task, while extrinsic motivation may result when the source of motivation occurs from outside the individual or task (Ormrod, 2004). Whereas intrinsic motivation may be the performance of a piece of music for the benefit of musical growth or the experience of performing with other capable musicians, extrinsic motivation could be viewed as the performance of the same piece of music for audience approval or a competitive rating. Studies confirm that intrinsic motivation may be the key to sustaining motivation over time (e.g., Driscoll, 2009; Hallam, 2002; Lacaille, 2008; Miksza, 2006). Teachers who instill in students a belief of the inherent worth of a task and its important benefits for the student may have an opportunity to drastically increase lifelong student achievement. Moreover, Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, and Blumenfeld (1993) noted that strong intrinsic motivation could lead to increased persistence, commitment, and involvement in the music program—worthy goals for any educator to inspire in their students. Furthermore, children tended to spend more time on a task if they valued the assignment and perceived the outcome as worthy of their efforts (Eccles et al., 1993).

Intrinsic motivation also plays a role in instrumental music practice—an important component of adolescent musical growth and development. Schmidt (2005) noted that the amount of practice time by seventh- through twelfth-grade band students most strongly correlated with feelings of intrinsic motivation. Moreover, the same study indicated that students were more likely to report greater amounts of effort toward a musical task when intrinsically motivated. Similarly, seventh- and eighth-grade students who were motivated intrinsically toward meeting personal goals and challenges on their instruments reported greater amounts of practice efficiency and time spent practicing (Miksza, 2006). Intrinsic motivation may also be directly related to quantity of practice and measures of performance achievement in beginning, junior high, and high school band students (e.g., McPherson & McCormick, 2000; Miksza, 2006; Schmidt, 2005). Regardless of a student's age, intrinsic motivation appears to result in greater performance achievement than extrinsic motivation. Rubin-Rabson (1941) noted that extrinsic rewards and verbal encouragement were not necessarily effective in increasing motivation to practice.

In general, motivation theorists divide achievement goals into two categories: (a) mastery goals (those that assist with learning new skills or building expertise in a domain) and (b) performance goals (those that help students to attain positive judgments of competence

and avoid negative views) (Bartels, Magun-Jackson, & Ryan, 2010; Hallam, 2002; Smith, 2005). An understanding of goal orientations may be imperative for the educator in that they define the reasons or purposes that students have for engaging in a variety of achievement tasks (Bråten & Strømsø, 2004). This inevitably implies that students view competence and success in varied and diverse ways. Like Julie, the fictional flute player in the opening vignette, adolescent musicians' goals may change over time for a variety of reasons.

Mastery Goals

Mastery goals (also known as learning goals, task goals, or process goals) involve a "desire to achieve competence by acquiring additional knowledge or mastering new skills" (Ormrod, 2004, p. 467). The term *mastery goals* will be used herein due to its frequent appearance throughout the literature. These goals often occur when a student seeks to improve their competence, endeavors to build upon new skills, or attempts to accomplish something challenging (Bråten & Strømsø, 2004; Nielsen, 2008; Smith, 2005). Similarly, mastery goal orientation may be viewed in relation to a need for achievement in which a student often displays a preference for challenging tasks expressing positive affect and pride regarding success (Bartels et al., 2010). This need for achievement will most often predict adoption of mastery goals (Bartels et al., 2010).

Various studies have sought to determine students' attitudes in relation to mastery goals. In research by Schmidt (2005), instrumental music students reported that their success was best defined by mastery and cooperative orientations, rather than competitive or ego orientations. Marsh, Craven, Hinkley, and Debus (2003) defined ego orientation as a combination of extrinsic motivational factors and performance goals. In a survey of 146 undergraduate college students, Bartels and colleagues (2010) found that a propensity toward achievement and mastery-goal orientation predicted the use of critical thinking strategies that, in turn, made students even more successful. Furthermore, Bartels and colleagues (2010) noted that achievement goals are proximal in that they are directly related to cognitive achievement, including self-regulated learning. Students who display mastery goal orientations most often view intelligence as malleable over time and, therefore, continue to achieve when presented with challenging tasks (Hallam, 2002).

In sum, the setting of mastery goals may generate the best possible results for music students, as these goals will help developing musicians to engage in more complex activities that may help them realize greater achievement (e.g., Hallam, 2002; Miksza, 2007; Nielsen, 2008; Ormrod, 2004; Smith, 2005). Moreover, a mastery goal orientation may continue to encourage students to persevere despite difficulties in accomplishing a task. The use of critical thinking skills and more cognitively diverse methodologies in problem solving are associated with the adoption of mastery goals and may bolster even greater musical achievement (Nielsen, 2008). Some studies suggest that adoption of mastery goals may lead to preferences for moderately challenging tasks that are viewed as able to be attainable through growth, persistence in the face of failure, and enhanced task enjoyment, as well as an increase in intrinsic motivation (e.g., Elliot & Church, 1997; Miksza, 2007).

Julie, from the opening narrative, appeared to display mastery goal orientation when persisting despite challenges presented in the practice room. Even though Julie joined band for social reasons, she eventually grew to exhibit a mastery goal orientation and now chooses to play her flute for the sole purpose of achieving improved results on her instrument. While some music students may adopt a mastery goal orientation, other students might adopt a performance goal orientation, which could also directly impact student outcomes.

Performance Goals

In contrast to mastery or learning goals, students who assume performance goal

orientations tend to demonstrate a "desire to present oneself as competent in the eyes of others" (Ormrod, 2004, p. 467). Performance goals may best be divided into two discrete categories: (a) performance-approach goals and (b) performance-avoidance goals. Performance goals may also be known as ego, ability, or outcome goals, implying a social comparison with others (Smith, 2005). An adoption of performance-approach goals, also referred to as ability-approach goals, may suggest that students tend to favor the enhancement of their abilities in order to demonstrate a competence in a specific area (Midgely, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001; Ormrod, 2004). Conversely, an embracing of performance-avoidance (or ability-avoidance) goals might be displayed when students endeavor to avoid either demonstrating a lack of ability in a domain or receiving adverse judgments (Midgely et al., 2001; Ormrod, 2004). Furthermore, performance-approach goals may best be exemplified by self-regulation of behavior in response to potentially positive outcomes, as well as promoting processes that ultimately lead to mastery patterns (Elliot & Church, 1997). Elliot and Church (1997) also noted that adoption of a performance goal may lead to preferences for easy or overly difficult tasks, withdrawal of effort in the face of failure, and decreased task enjoyment. Students who display a performance goal orientation most likely see intelligence and ability as fixed and unchanging leading to a more terminal outlook (Hallam, 2002).

Researchers have found that music students tend to display ability-approach goals most often. Whereas ability-approach goals may be viewed as positive for development and may push students to achieve greater results, they may also be unconstructive in that students who tend to embrace such goals often use short-term memorization and learning strategies to achieve temporary results with minimal effort (Ormrod, 2004), such as with the graded performance of a task (Elliot & Church, 1997). Likewise, ability-approach orientations may be fostered through a competitive learning environment where public performances that promote social comparison with others are common (Nielsen, 2008). In this view, ability, rather than effort, appears to be paramount for a successful performance (Niesen, 2008). As a result, this enhanced personal scrutiny may lead students to view themselves harshly in comparison with peers.

Ability-avoidance goals may be detrimental to the music student. A student who tends to display ability-avoidance goals may be less likely to undertake the challenge of musical study in the first place with its inherent auditions and public performances (Nielsen, 2008). In general, students who strive to demonstrate competence in a given field may use more cognitive self-regulation strategies than those students who, through a fear of failure, demonstrate ability-avoidance goals (Bartels et al., 2010). Likewise, students who engage in ability-avoidance goals may avoid tasks that would enhance their abilities due to their fear of failure and views that a task may be too difficult to accomplish successfully (Ormrod, 2004). McGregor & Elliot (2005) noted that students with an ability-avoidance outlook may avoid situations in which they might be judged and experience shame when confronted with failure. It has been suggested that those with ability-avoidance goal orientation may have developed this view out of a childhood fear of having love withdrawn when failure was imminent (Elliot & Thrash, 2004). Ability-avoidance goals are most often distinguished by self-regulatory behaviors that lead to potential negative outcomes. These goals also tend to yield processes that promote helpless patterns of behavior (e.g., anxiety or task distraction), including a decrease in intrinsic motivation (Elliot & Church, 1997). In addition, most ego, competition, and avoid failure orientations have been found to be adverse to student achievement and growth (Schmidt, 2005). Researchers have suggested that ability-avoidance goals lead to poor academic performance and less intrinsic motivation regarding a task (e.g. Bråten & Strømsø, 2004).

Most musicians, including Julie from the opening narrative, exhibit a performance goal orientation when comparing themselves with others. At one time throughout her musical development, Julie did not want to disappoint her best friend or her teacher by displaying a lack of performance ability. This ability-avoidance goal orientation did little for Julie's musical maturation. Later, however, Julie's ability-avoidance mindset subsided into a mastery goal orientation where she chose to learn for her own personal edification. It should also be noted that Julie displayed an ability-approach orientation when desiring to play her flute as well as her brother played his trombone. However, a point of clarification might be that we do not know if Julie wanted to become better than the professional

soloist as a matter of comparison with her own abilities (thereby displaying an ability-approach goal orientation) or if she was displaying a mastery goal orientation in which she wanted to become better at her flute, not for comparison with others, but merely to strive to achieve her musical potential.

Considerations of Achievement Goals

In considering achievement goals and their implications for the developing musician, research on the formation of such goals must also be considered. Raynor (1983) defined three primary stages of motivation. In Raynor's (1983) model, the "early" stage may be characterized by a child endeavoring to achieve immediate success, thereby gaining a sudden feeling of competence. The "middle" stage might be evident when the student desires a need for future success and has self-evaluated their personal abilities. The "late" stage may be exemplified by students attempting to retain their feelings of past accomplishments while developing attributes and skills that may define their sense of self. Throughout these stages, one fundamental ingredient appears to influence motivation more than any other—the educator.

Various studies have concluded that the teacher's role is paramount in the development of student motivation. Teachers appear to not only affect the initiation of motivation within students, but also the magnitude of that motivation (Asmus, 1986; Lacaille, 2008). Similarly, Hallam (2002) noted that the teacher's role might be crucial in encouraging students to persist in musical study and enhance motivational beliefs. Other studies have indicated that early teachers are most effective in bolstering motivation when they are viewed as warm and sympathetic towards students (e.g., Hallam, 2002; Lacaille, 2008; Sosniak, 1985). In the early stages of musical development, teachers who are perceived as uncritical and who provide regular encouragement bolstered student motivation, whereas at the advanced stages of musical learning, high-status role models best enhanced student motivation (Hallam, 2002). Other research has suggested that teachers are able to influence the student's perceptions of success and failure leading to increased achievement motivation and persistence when encountering difficulties (e.g., Asmus, 1985).

In addition to the teacher, a range of other experiences may also increase achievement motivation. Kukla (1978) noted that prior positive experiences improved students' attitudes toward an activity and encouraged future participation through increased motivation. Likewise, studies on achievement motivation appear to show that motivated learners tend to be more cognitively engaged and, subsequently, exert additional effort than their less motivated peers (e.g., Ericcson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993; McPherson & McCormick, 2000). Bandura (1989) suggested that achievement motivation might be at its peak when self-efficacy beliefs are combined with some moderate uncertainty about the outcome of the task at hand. Thus, the student may need to view him or herself as competent, but challenged.

Increasing achievement motivation may be vital for the educator due to negative trends in learning tendencies. Austin and Berg (2006) noted that students who had been playing their musical instrument for a longer period of time tended to express less motivation to practice. Likewise, at a certain age, negative attitudes and behaviors that defeat any major investment in schooling become commonplace (e.g., Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Eccles et al., 1993). Some research appears to indicate that this decrease in achievement motivation occurs between the fourth and fifth grades (e.g., Haladyna & Thomas, 1979), while other studies noted that academic motivation decreases between the sixth and seventh grades (e.g., Anderman & Maehr, 1994). These decreases in achievement motivation make inspiring any effortful schoolwork challenging, but imperative for student success.

Discussion

Motivation plays a role in nearly all human decision-making processes. Whether based upon intrinsic or extrinsic motivational factors, or various goal orientations, without motivation, little may be achieved. Researchers appear to have found that motivation plays a crucial role in the developing of human achievement (e.g., Driscoll, 2009; Hallam, 2002; Miksza, 2006). The achievement motivation paradigm has vital implications for the classroom as studies indicate that student motivation tends to lessen during the middle school years (e.g., Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Eccles et al., 1993; Haladyna & Thomas, 1979). With the generally accepted figure of 20% of student achievement being attributed to motivation (Asmus, 1994), teachers must factor this important human element into their approach to students and lesson planning. Like adults, children may tend to spend more time on a task if they believe in its inherent worth (Eccles et al., 1993). Teachers would do well to consider how they might increase the adolescent students' valuing of a task when they present a new assignment. Making the case for learning must be the norm in the achievement motivation-centered classroom. Teachers are presumably well acquainted with what material they feel that a student should know—their case being strengthened by nationally adopted standards of curriculum in nearly every subject area. However, it is imperative that students recognize the inherent worth of their efforts and take ownership of their own edification, leading to true achievement-motivated learning.

The pivotal concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are also worthy of consideration by the educator. While stickers, trinkets, and parties provide short-term extrinsic motivation, educators must strive to increase intrinsic motivation, as studies indicate the importance of intrinsic motivation in sustaining enthusiasm in an activity over time (e.g., Driscoll, 2009; Hallam, 2002; Miksza, 2006). Goal-setting charts and supplementary materials, including the incorporation of educational technology, may help to inspire students to achieve in an intrinsic manner consistent with higher educational attainment. The consideration of appropriate types of achievement motivation is equally important in the music classroom.

Like the general classroom, student motivation in music may be based upon a variety of factors. While many students may join music ensembles initially for non-musical reasons, persistence and continued involvement is almost entirely dependent on motivation. Student development in music tends to be based upon regular systematic rehearsal—practice—and is most often increased by intrinsic motivational factors. While the fear of a bad grade or a less-than-desirable festival rating may initiate short-term practicing, students who are motivated to practice and improve for their own benefit based upon intrinsic motivation tend to report increased quantities of practice time (e.g., McPherson & McCormick, 2000; Miksza, 2006; Schmidt, 2005). This increased amount of time spent in deliberate practice will almost certainly result in musical improvement and greater feelings of self-efficacy. While competitive ratings or pizza parties may increase short-term positive affect, they should not be the hallmark of a music program, as studies show that extrinsic motivation may not necessarily relate to increased amounts of student involvement or achievement (e.g., Rubin-Rabson, 1941).

In considering achievement goal orientation in the music classroom, educators would do well to realize that students might approach their performance and membership in the ensemble from dramatically different viewpoints. Typically, the adoption of a performance goal orientation tends to be more detrimental to the musician than acceptance of mastery goal mindset (Lacaille, 2008). Creating an environment for student success that is not based upon social comparison with others may help to develop student achievement in music. Educators must be cognizant of the innate desire for social comparison at the middle and high school levels and strive to be patient and understanding to inspire appropriate motivational growth so that students do not approximate a performance-avoidance mindset. Conversely, while performance-approach goals may be beneficial for the student, as they tend to lead to using self-regulating strategies and the achievement of greater results (Elliot & Church, 1997), these types of goals also tend to lead to a view that ability, rather than effort, is the primary force in a successful performance (Nielsen, 2008). In any classroom, and especially the music classroom, educators must endeavor to foster an environment based upon a fundamental grounding in effortful attributions for a student to be successful, rather than a belief in innate talent. All students should view music as worthy of study in which their efforts lead to greater performances and creative musical opportunities.

With the student looking inward on their own desire for learning a musical skill, true development and growth may occur. Mastery goals may be the best outcome for students in music as they focus on the achievement of proficiency for its own sake instead of relying on a comparison with others. Likewise, the literature appears to indicate that adopting a mastery goal orientation results in greater use of critical thinking strategies and persistence, which may make students more successful (Bartels et al., 2010). The ideal musical outcome should be students who are self-motivated to achieve greater results and desire to enhance their skills for their own personal edification. The use of critical thinking skills from an adoption of a mastery goal orientation may allow students to use more diverse methodologies (Nielsen, 2008) and become energized based upon accomplishment, thereby persisting in musical study in the face of failure. While this may seem like a lofty goal for the educator, students may tend to adopt a mastery goal orientation if they are consistently provided with attainable challenges and reminded that their success is based upon effortful behaviors. Students who believe that they are able to overcome challenges and desire to succeed for their own edification will undoubtedly experience greater positive affect and seek larger challenges in the future.

In conclusion, increasing student motivation is the key to a successful musical experience for students and teachers. While student motivation is even more crucial for the music educator, as many music classes tend to be elective subjects that depend on substantial enrollments to justify costs and equipment purchases (Smith, 2005), student motivation may very well predict all other achievement outcomes and provide for a rich, lifelong experience in music. Students who adopt a mastery goal orientation might use more cognitively diverse strategies and succeed despite challenges—imperative skills for success in life, as well as music. Fostering intrinsic motivation, where students learn for their own sake and are rewarded with positive affect, may lead to success in musical study and music appreciation for life.

Like Julie, the flute student from the opening vignette, motivational views are malleable and may change often throughout our lifetime. While students may join musical ensembles for a variety of reasons, a patient elementary and middle school educator who inspires students toward creativity and achievement, while fostering the idea that music is worthy of student effort and study may make a tremendous difference in students' lives. Julie achieved outstanding results on her instrument in just a few short years and went through various stages of musical motivation culminating in an ostensible mastery goal orientation. This outlook afforded Julie the view that she could achieve great results through her own effortful activities and that her musical future is dependent on her willingness to persist despite encountered difficulties, as well as a perception of the inherent value of her musical task—worthy goals for students in music programs everywhere.

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