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Graduate Studies

MOTIVATION: GOAL ORIENTATION AMONG MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

A Chapter Style Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for an

Education Specialist Degree in School Psychology

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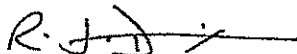Department of Psychology, School Psychology Program

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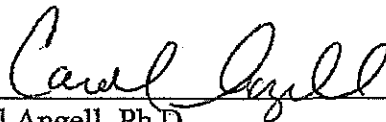MOTIVATION: GOAL ORIENTATION AMONG MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

By: Sara R. Byrne

We recommend acceptance of this thesis in partial fulfillment of the candidate's
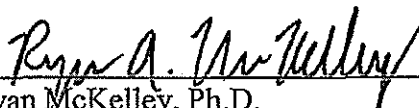requirements for an Education Specialist Degree in School Psychology

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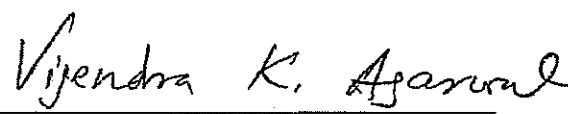Carol Angell, Ph.D.   Date
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ABSTRACT

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The present study examined achievement goal orientations among middle school students to examine potential differences in goal orientations between students' developmental level and/or gender. The relationship between students' personal achievement goals and their perception of the classroom goal orientations was also investigated. Three hundred and sixty eight students were sampled across seventh and ninth grade from a junior high located in a Midwest town using a 28-item survey. A MANOVA revealed that boys are more likely to hold performance-approach goals than girls, and perceived their classroom to be more performance-approach or performance-avoidance oriented than girls. Results also found a small positive relationship between students' personal achievement goals and their perceptions of the classroom goal orientations. Finally, the subject type students were given (English, math, social studies, science) was found to impact students' perception of classroom orientations. Math and social studies were perceived as being more mastery oriented than English and science. No other significant effects or interactions found. The obtained results from the study show support for gender differences in students' achievement goals, and the slight influence the classroom can have on students' personal achievement goal orientations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation is a very powerful factor that determines how much time, effort, and

interest one puts into the completion of a task. Motivation influences all aspects of an

individual's life, and has been shown to emerge at a very early age and continue on

throughout one's life. Slavin (2000) describes motivation as a critical component to

learning that functions as an internal process and guides our behavior. This suggests that

if students are to be academically successful within our nation's schools, then they need

to be academically motivated in order to experience high quality levels of learning. The

question is then, who is responsible for students' motivation? While motivation is highly

individualistic and dependent on personality factors, it also is very much a product of the

individual's environment (Slavin, 2000). While educators cannot control students'

personality structures, they can instead influence the environmental aspect of the

construct to positively influence students' motivational levels.

During the 2005-2006 school year, the Coalition for Psychology in Schools and

Education conducted a teacher needs survey that involved teachers from across the

United States, in order to learn how to help support preschool through 12th grade

teachers with student achievement goals (Coalition for Psychology in Schools and

Education, 2006). The study surveyed teachers on the areas of classroom management,

instructional strategies, classroom diversity, and parental communication needs in order

to learn how to increase the effectiveness of professional development workshops for teachers. In regard to academic motivation, teachers rated student motivation as the second highest area of interest for instructional skills. More specifically, 57% of teachers who were sampled responded that they were very interested in learning specific instructional skills in order to motivate their students to learn (Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, 2006). The results that were obtained from this study are significant in that they illustrate the large concern that teachers have regarding students' motivational levels. It also indicates that many teachers are interested in learning instructional strategies that they can use with their students to enhance and support students' motivation within their classroom.

The importance of motivation within the educational environment has been demonstrated through numerous studies that have examined the role of motivation on academic achievement, grades, quality of learning, engagement, and more. For example, a study by Sungur (2007) found that student motivation became the primary reason for students' level of engagement when completing assigned tasks. The study also found that the students who were more motivated on the tasks were also more likely to regularly use the appropriate metacognitive skills within the academic environment (Sungur, 2007). Similarly, Slavin (2000) states that motivation is crucial to student engagement. It can influence students' participation for academic tasks, and can even determine the quality of learning that students will gain from school and the classroom activities. It has been suggested that it is the educator's responsibility to learn about their students' motivation towards school, and then to use this knowledge to help prompt and sustain their levels of academic motivation. This is what will help to facilitate students' level of engagement

within the classroom, and support students' need for learning (Slavin, 2000). Thus, if it is the goal of educators for students to learn and be academically successful within school, then teachers and school administrators should encompass highly motivating strategies within the classroom in order to engage and excite students about school and learning.

Academic motivation is a critical component to the learning process, and the influence of motivation has been demonstrated through numerous studies (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; Morrone & Schutz, 2000; Slavin, 2000). Fortunately, the research base concerning motivation and education is extensive, and provides significant, evidenced-based information that can be used to learn in detail about the various functions and influence that motivation can have for students within the academic environment.

Motivation

The following is a review of the past research and literature that is available on the area of motivation, achievement goal orientations, and its implications for education. First, I will discuss the main motivational theories that are currently in place, along with providing a critique for each theory. Then I will explain the research that is currently available on students' developmental level (grade) and achievement goals. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion on the role that gender may have with academic motivation and achievement goals.

Motivational Theories

Motivational research has come to identify four major theories that attempt to explain students' academic motivation. The four theories include: expectancy-value theory, attribution theory, social cognitive theory, and achievement goal theory. Each of the theories provides a valuable insight into the complex construct of motivation, and

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how it functions relative to the academic environment. Upon a review of the motivational theories and literature, two distinct approaches to viewing academic motivation seem to dominate the literature. Early research within the motivational field held the idea of motivation as a drive, where motivation is largely an internal state that directs individuals' towards specific behaviors (Covington, 2000). This perspective was adopted mostly by the expectancy-value and attribution theories due to the large emphasis that this approach places on the emotions that influence and/or guide our motivation. The second perspective is the idea of motivation as goals, where individuals' goals provide meaning, direction, and purpose for the behaviors that individuals engage in (Covington, 2000). This approach has been primarily adopted by the achievement goal theory due to the large role that the theory places on student goals and motivation. The following section begins by introducing the motives as drives approach through the expectancy-value, attribution, and social cognitive theories, and then transitions to the motives as goals perspective through the achievement goal theory.

Expectancy-Value Model

Atkinson (1957) originally proposed the expectancy-value theory in his work on incentives, motives, and expectancies in regard to risk-taking behavior. Atkinson's original work sought to explain how individual differences and the degree of motivation influences achievement related behavior (Atkinson, 1957). In his seminal work, he outlined the variables of expectancies, incentives, and motives as important factors in achievement motivation. Expectancies are a cognitive anticipation for a particular consequence to occur following a specific action. Incentives are the values that are placed on either the attainment of a specific goal, or the desire to avoid an unpleasant

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consequence that may result from the individuals' actions. Finally, motives are the individuals' desire to reach a certain level of satisfaction for a particular class of incentives (Atkinson, 1957). Also, three distinct classes of incentives, or motives, were delineated that included approach tendencies to maximize satisfaction, avoidant tendencies to minimize pain, and a failure-avoidant disposition (Atkinson, 1957).

Atkinson's work illustrated how the expectancy-value theory can be used to describe the motivation of students within the educational setting. According to the expectancy-value theory, motivation acts as a multiplicative function where the individual's motive, expectancy of a particular consequence, and the attainment and value of an incentive all determine the amount of motivation individuals put forth for a given task (Atkinson, 1957). Atkinson (1957) also proposed that students' perceptions and expectations for success can greatly be determined through their task values. Task values were defined to be comprised of four distinct components: attainment value/importance, intrinsic value, utility value/usefulness, and cost, which function together to determine the students' overall value for the task at hand (Wigfield, 1994). Thus, if students hold high expectations for success, hold high task values, and feel competent in their abilities to be successful for a given task, they are much more likely to be motivated within the classroom.

Atkinson's theory stood for many years until eventually Eccles and Wigfield, prominent motivational researchers, revised Atkinson's theory. The most recent and revised expectancy-value theory suggested that students' persistence, performance, and choice of academic tasks are predicted more by their expectations that they have for success, along with the values that they hold for the particular task (Eccles et al., 1983;

Wigfield, 1994). Also, the idea that students' competence, or feelings of self-efficacy, influences their development of task values was also added to the newly revised theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). The new modifications to the expectancy-value theory suggest that students' expectations and values for a given task can be directly influenced by their personal competence beliefs. This means that if students perceive their competence to be low, they are much more likely to have similarly low expectations for success and low task values. The integration of students' competence beliefs into the expectancy-value theory connects this theory to the social cognitive theory of motivation (i.e., Bandura).

While this theory offered an interesting explanation for how students are motivated within the academic environment, it failed to explain how other environmental and individual factors, such as causal attributions, may function to influence students' motivation towards school. Furthermore, research has also suggested that individuals' motivation cannot fully be explained just by examining their expectancies (Weiner, 1985). The attribution theory, social cognitive theory, and the achievement goal theory attempted to account the environmental and individual factors in their perspectives on academic motivation. While the expectancy-value theory can be considered as one of the first publicized theories of motivation, it also helped to pave the way for additional theories and research that has been conducted on the area of academic motivation.

Attribution Theory

The second major motivational theory is the attribution theory. It has been suggested that the founder of the attributional approach to psychology was Fritz Heider in 1958 in his desire to examine the existence of causal structures (Heider, 1958). Weiner

developed his attribution theory partly from the original work by Heider, along with the seminal motivational research that was produced by Atkinson and his colleagues. This theory comes from Weiner's similar interests and work with Atkinson on the expectancy-value theory, but also remains distinct in its specific beliefs regarding how emotions interact to influence academic motivation (Weiner, 1958). Weiner suggests that the causal attributions that individuals make for their academic successes or failures influences their emotions, which then leads to their emotions influencing their levels of motivation that they exert towards future schoolwork (Weiner, 1985). The attribution theory is also different from the expectancy-value theory in that the theory is represented as a historical sequence, and that it also connects value to the emotions that are produced following an activity (Weiner, 1985). Weiner's work examined the various dimensions, or causes, of success and failure in regards to achievement related behavior, and how they function in reference to achievement motivation.

According to Weiner's original work, the attribution theory states that motivation involves a sequence that begins with an outcome in which the individual interprets the event as either positive or negative. Next, the individual engages in a causal search to determine the reasons why the outcome occurred, such as what the antecedents where, which helps to make the causal decisions. Causes can then be grouped into three distinct categories: locus of control, stability, and controllability. The type of causal dimension can influence the psychological consequences that the individual will experience, which in turn, relates to their expectancy and affect process. Finally, the expectancy and affect outcomes will dictate future behavior that the individual will engage in (Weiner, 1985). It is clear that Weiner's original attribution theory strongly suggests that motivation is not

simply just a relationship, or a simple cause and effect construct, but instead is a much more complex, sequential process that individuals continually progress through (Weiner, 1985). From the original theory, one can see just how similar the attribution theory is to the expectancy-value theory. According to Weiner, the causal attributions that students make have the ability to influence their expectancy of success, but are not sufficient alone to determine students' academic motivation or future behavior. Thus, Weiner sought to try to clarify and identify exactly what determines students' academic motivation.

Four main achievement attributions were identified within the theory as significant explanations that students can make that pertain to their obtained success or failure: ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Furthermore, these four attributions can be separated into three main causal dimensions: locus of causality, stability, and controllability (Weiner, 1994). The locus of causality refers to whether the individual makes causal attributions that are either internal (i.e., within oneself) or external (i.e., something outside of oneself). The dimension of stability relates to whether the individual believes that the causes of the outcome are stable and not changing, or unstable and variable. Finally, the dimension of controllability is whether the student associates the perceived causes of an outcome to be within their control, or something that they have no control over (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Morrone & Schutz, 2000; Weiner, 1994). Thus, the type of causal attributions that students make can determine their subsequent motivation and behavior that they display towards future academic tasks.

In a more recent reinterpretation of the attribution theory, the authors simply stated that students' personal perceptions regarding their achievement outcomes (i.e.,

why they were or were not successful) determines their motivation towards their future academic tasks (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). The attribution theory places a large emphasis on students' cognitions and emotions that they experience with their academic performance when explaining student motivation. More specifically, the attribution theory focuses on the underlying reasons that students have for why they were or were not successful given the particular task.

When the attribution theory was originally proposed it offered the field of academic motivation new and exciting information. It not only supported most of the ideas from the expectancy-value theory, but it also extended the theory with the importance that emotions play within the motivational process (Weiner, 1985). This is one reason why the attribution theory is significant, and why Weiner is credited for producing this seminal motivational research (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). While the attribution theory described the role that internal causal attributions play within the theory, it failed to discuss the magnitude that other internal ability factors, such as students' self-efficacy or self-regulation, can have on academic motivation (Morrone & Schutz, 2000). Instead, the attribution theory focused more on how the three causal dimensions functioned together to influence students' motivation; however, it did not indicate whether if any one of the dimensions could have a more powerful influence on motivation than the others.

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura is famously known for the development of the social cognitive theory in his work on motivation, self-regulation, and learning. Bandura's early research originally focused on studying the role that modeling plays on individuals' learning, along with the

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process of behavioral change and its impact on individuals' level of self-efficacy (Morrone & Schutz, 2000). Through his research, he formed his theory on self-efficacy. This theory suggested that an individuals' level of efficacy relates to how much effort will be put forth, for how long it will be sustained, and how they will cope during times of adversity and obstacles that they may encounter (Bandura, 1977). Bandura's continued interest in self-efficacy and social learning eventually lead him to propose the social cognitive theory of motivation.

Bandura's seminal work on the social cognitive theory sought to thoroughly explain the theory's position regarding human motivation, causation, self-regulatory processes, self-efficacy, and human cognitions (Bandura, 1986). According to Bandura, a major emphasis of the social cognitive theory was the strong belief in the interactional model of causation to explain human motivation. This theory suggested that environmental, personal, and behavioral factors function together and also become determinants of each other (Bandura, 1986). More specifically, this interactional perspective, unique to Bandura's theory and building off of prior motivational work, states that individuals do have the ability to have control and power over their lives. This belief acts as the foundation from which the rest of Bandura's social cognitive theory was built upon.

Within Bandura's original theory consists of two main hallmark constructs that the theory was built around. First is the construct of self-regulation, which Bandura described as a moderator of human motivation and behavior (Bandura, 1986). Bandura believed that individuals' self-regulation processes operated through the three distinct sub-functions of self-observation, self-judgment, and self-reaction. Self-observation is the

process of monitoring one's own actions in order to continually evaluate their behavior, provide realistic standards for themselves, and to be able to have control over their own actions (Bandura, 1986). Self-judgment is the process by which individuals evaluate their performance in relation to others or a particular standard, and whether their judgment is regarded favorably or negatively (Bandura, 1986; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Finally, self-reaction is the individuals' response to the outcome of their actions, which will either produce a positive or negative self-reaction. It is Bandura's belief that individuals will tend to seek positive self-reactions, and to try and avoid behaviors that would produce negative self-reactions (Bandura, 1986; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). These three sub-functions operate together to produce the individuals' overall self-regulation ability, which in turn can influence their level of motivation. It is here that Bandura's support for the interactional model of causation can be seen. Bandura suggested that individuals' environment is influenced through their self-regulatory processes; however, the environment also has the ability to affect the individual through those same self-regulation subcomponents. It has been suggested that students who engage in higher self-regulation skills employ higher active learning strategies, set multiple goals for themselves, and appear more confident in their abilities to complete a task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). This point illustrates the importance of self-regulation abilities in regards to the metacognitive skills that students utilize, and the quality of learning and education that they experience.

The second hallmark of the social cognitive theory is the self-efficacy construct. According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy is an individuals' own judgment regarding their abilities to accomplish, or carry out, a certain level of performance. Bandura

identified four separate sources of individuals' self-efficacy: enactive attainment, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological state. Enactive attainment is considered to be the most important source of self-efficacy as it relates to the individuals' past mastery experience (Bandura, 1986; Morrone & Schutz, 2000). For example, a student who experiences consistent academic success will be more likely to have a higher sense of self-efficacy than a student who consistently experiences academic failure. Vicarious experience is when individuals see others perform successfully on a given task, which helps to raise their own self-efficacy perceptions (Bandura, 1986; Morrone & Schutz, 2000). The third source of self-efficacy of verbal persuasion is the encouraging of individuals into believing that they are able and have the skills that are needed to accomplish a particular task (Bandura, 1986; Morrone & Schutz, 2000). Finally, physiological state is the fourth source of self-efficacy, where students rely more on their internal feelings (i.e., anxiety, excitement, etc.) when making determinations regarding their capabilities (Bandura, 1986; Morrone & Schutz, 2000). Within the social cognitive theory, the concept of self-efficacy also is a powerful determinant in students' academic motivation. When students hold high self-efficacy beliefs they are more likely to feel confident in their abilities to successfully complete the task at hand.

The significance of self-efficacy within the educational environment has been demonstrated frequently in a number of motivational research studies. According to Seifert (2004), self-efficacy is correlated with many achievement-related behaviors such as student sense of self-worth, motivation, cognitive skills, and achievement. Similarly, another study found that students with a high sense of self-efficacy are more likely to engage in more adaptive and mastery inclined academic behaviors, whereas students with

a low sense of self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate behaviors that are more performance oriented (Dweck, 1986). Finally, students with high levels of self-efficacy were found to utilize more sophisticated metacognitive strategies and persisted longer on tasks that were difficult (Sungur, 2007). Thus, these studies help to illustrate the important role that self-efficacy plays for students with the school setting.

Finally, Bandura integrated his extensive research base on social learning within the social cognitive theory to illustrate how learning also influences student motivation. Bandura identified two major types of learning that students can engage in. First is the concept of observational learning, where individuals have the ability to learn new skills and/or behaviors through the observation of others (Bandura, 1986). Once the new behaviors and/or cognitive skills were observed, individuals were more likely to be motivated to emit these observed behaviors if it would result in rewards or reinforcement for them. Second, enactive learning is where learning occurs from the outcomes following ones actions (Bandura, 1986). The outcomes that result from the display of the newly learned behaviors or skills are thought to create the individuals' cognitive representations, which will either facilitate the maintenance or impede the future occurrence of the behavior (Bandura, 1986). This learning aspect that Bandura included within the theory illustrates the role that cognitions have on individuals, their actions, and their motivation.

According to a more recent interpretation of the social cognitive theory, students' motivation is determined by their self-regulation processes in which factors of the environment, individual, and behavior play key roles (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). This indicates that student motivation is comprised of not just an individual's personality

traits, but environmental and behavioral factors as well. This idea was supported by a

study by Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2002), who found that the construct of motivation

functions as an unstable trait that is dependent on the context and the situation. In

regards to education, this means that it is possible for students to experience varying

levels of motivation within the school environment and can be differentially motivated

for each distinct academic subject and/or academic tasks. These varying motivational

levels can all be due to a multitude of interacting factors. Thus, when examining students'

motivation and quality of self-regulation abilities, one must consider the multiple factors

(i.e., environmental, personal, and behavioral) that interact together to produce their self-

regulatory skills within the educational environment (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002).

As it can be seen, the theory composed by Bandura provided the field of

motivation with an extensive and very detailed theory that attempted to integrate many

aspects of the attribution and expectancy-value motivation theories. The social cognitive

theory, along with the expectancy-value theory, identifies the importance of students'

competence in relation to their motivation towards school. Similarly, both the social

cognitive theory and the attribution theory incorporate students' beliefs regarding their

abilities, and reasons for their successes and failures within each theory (Morrone &

Schutz, 2000). However, while the social cognitive theory believed that goal setting was

an essential component for individuals' self-regulation abilities and for helping to direct

their behavior into accomplishing a task, it did not make any clear distinctions between

different types of goals, or how different goals function in relation to academic

achievement and student motivation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Thus, the Achievement

Goal Orientation theory sought to focus more on the various achievement goals that

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students can have, and exactly how the different goals operate in context of the school, motivation levels, and academic achievement (Ames, 1992).

Achievement Goal Orientation Theory

Unlike the other motivational theories, the achievement goal theory developed from the combined work of many well-known motivational researchers. It is widely cited that the research by Dweck (1986), Nicholls (1984), and Ames (1992) were the major contributors to the goal orientation theory and they also triggered the start of a new area of research within the academic motivational area. The achievement goal theory incorporates and reinforces many ideas that were put forth on academic motivation by the attribution and social cognitive theories. This theory encompasses both the cognitive processes along with the affective component and how they function in regards to students' achievement goals and motivation.

As stated previously, the achievement goal orientation theory is focused on explaining students' academic behavior through the types of goals that they adopt. Before trying to comprehend the overall theory, it is first important to understand what the theorists mean by achievement goals. According to Ames (1992), an achievement goal is the "specific purposes the students' have for their achievement related behavior, and can be used to explain how students will respond to, approach, or engage in different academic tasks" (p. 261). Thus, according to Ames, goals have the ability to influence, or motivate, students' academic behaviors toward classroom assignments or activities. Also, as it has already been indicated, there are different kinds of achievement goals that students can adopt.

When the achievement goal theory was originally proposed, there were only two main types of achievement goals: mastery goals and performance goals, which will be discussed in turn. First, mastery goals (also known as learning or task-involved) is where students are focused on increasing their knowledge base, learning for the sake of learning, and to understand, or master, new material (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986). These students are focused on developing new skills, having a comprehensive understanding of their academic work, and believe that effort determines whether they will be successful (Ames, 1992). Furthermore, research on achievement goal orientations has clearly indicated that students who engage in mastery goals also utilize more adaptive educational strategies that they use within the school environment. These students are more likely to engage in challenging tasks to stretch their knowledge, persevere through obstacles, are not afraid of failure because it is a part of learning, employ self-regulated learning strategies, and continually check their understanding on new material that they are being taught (Ames, 1992; Covington, 2000; Dweck, 1986; Morrone & Schutz, 2000).

In regards to a mastery goal orientation and the impact on academic motivation, it is believed that students who adopt these goals are more intrinsically motivated towards academic tasks and learning instead of being motivated through external factors such as grades or rewards (Elliot & Church, 1997). Additional achievement goal orientation research has also supported this idea that mastery oriented students are more intrinsically motivated, engage in deep level processing, use planning, and are persistent with academic tasks (Elliot, McGregor, & Gable, 1999; Grant & Dweck, 2003). Another study by Pintrich (2000) evaluated the importance of mastery goals on learning and

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achievement. In this study, the author looked at goal orientation among middle school students (n = 150), and found that mastery goal oriented students employed more cognitive strategies, had higher self-regulation skills, and were more organized than students with performance based goals. Their results also suggested that because mastery goal students place such a high importance on learning to understand the material, and on improving their performance from their past performance attempts, they are more likely to hold higher self-efficacy beliefs about themselves which helps them be resilient to failure and/or mistakes, and persevere until they master the material (Pintrich, 2000). According to motivational research, it appears that mastery oriented students are motivated by their strong interest and desire to learn, and is considered to promote the most optimal levels of learning for students.

The second goal orientation proposed within the original achievement goal theory was performance goals (also known as ego-involved, or ability goals). Contrary to mastery goals, performance goals were originally described as a focus upon one's academic output (Ames, 1992). This means that students who employ performance goals are concerned with how competent they appear to others, receiving positive judgments or evaluations, actively trying to avoid negative feedback, and trying to outperform others (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986). Learned helplessness is another quality that has been linked with performance goals. As described by Alloy, Peterson, Abramson, and Seligman (1984), learned helplessness occurs when individuals experience events that they deem to be out of their control, which leads to their belief that their responses are separate from their outcomes. Furthermore, learned helplessness can lead to lower levels of motivation, cognitive delays, and emotional setbacks (Nolen-Hoeksema, Girgus, & Seligman, 1986).

It was originally thought that students with performance goals engage in more maladaptive academic behaviors in which learned helplessness was included. According to Grant and Dweck (2003), students with a performance goal orientation and who were focused on ability levels tend to experience feelings of helplessness and debilitation after receiving negative feedback or setback on an academic task. Some of the maladaptive patterns that performance oriented students displayed that represented a helplessness pattern included avoidance of challenging tasks for fear of failure, and lower likelihood to persist when they encounter difficulties (Dweck, 1986; Elliot & Church, 1997). Similarly, while mastery goal oriented students were more intrinsically motivated, students with a performance goal orientation tended to be extrinsically motivated through the outcomes of their work, such as grades, positive judgments, and/or through receiving tangible items (Morrone & Schutz, 2000). Thus, in the original theory, the performance goal orientation was thought to relate to more negative outcomes on student learning.

Revisions of the achievement goal theory indicated that not all students fall under the mastery or performance goal orientation, and that the performance orientation itself is too general in its description of the diverse academic behaviors that can fall under this category (Elliot & Church, 1997). Instead, researchers suggested that the performance orientation can be split into two distinct goal approaches that students can adopt which also lead to two separate academic outcomes (Elliot & Church, 1997; Harackiewicz, Pintrich, Barron, Elliot, & Thrash, 2002). First, there is a performance-approach orientation where students are focused upon being academically successful within their classes and on academic tasks (Grant & Dweck, 2003). While this definition is similar to the original achievement theory, it does have some subtle differences. Unlike what the

original theory stated regarding the maladaptive academic outcomes for performance oriented goals, research has instead suggested that the performance-approach orientation may actually produce more positive academic outcomes. In a study conducted by Elliot, McGregor, and Gable (1999), students with performance-approach goals engaged in more adaptive academic behaviors that were similar to students with mastery goals. Due to the students' strong desire to be academically successful and be perceived as highly competent, they are more likely to be persistent and put more effort into their academic tasks (Elliot et al., 1999). This is thought to be due to the students' strong focus on the outcomes of assigned academic tasks. Finally, research by Grant and Dweck (2003) has also suggested that students encompass one of three reasons for endorsing performance-approach goals: a) to validate their sense of self (i.e., ability), b) are normative in nature, or c) they are focused upon receiving positive outcomes (i.e., being successful). Their research further indicated that the more successful performance-approach students are, the more likely they are to continue to engage in the adaptive academic behaviors; however, the maladaptive outcomes are more likely to surface when students have a low sense of ability and/or have minimal academic experiences with success.

The second type of performance goal that was suggested by research was the performance-avoidance orientation. Achievement motivational research has defined the performance-avoidance orientation as students' desire to avoid any negative judgments or perceptions regarding their ability or competence and have a fear of failure (Elliot & Church, 1997). Students who adopt performance-avoidance goals are concerned not about learning the material, but instead about what judgments their peers will make about them. Due to this focus, the performance-avoidance approach is considered to be the

more aversive achievement orientation that students can adopt. Multiple studies on performance-avoidance goals suggest that this type of achievement goal actually can reduce students' levels of intrinsic motivation, and are linked to many maladaptive educational outcomes (Elliot & Church, 1997; Grant & Dweck, 2003; Harackiewicz et al., 2002). With much of the motivational research focusing on relating achievement goals to intrinsic levels of motivation, the performance-avoidance orientation has actually been linked to have a negative consequence on students' intrinsic motivation levels. A study examining a proposed hierarchical model of the three distinct goal orientations (mastery, performance-approach, performance-avoidance) found that undergraduate students who endorsed performance-avoidance goals had a strong fear of academic failure, a low sense of competence expectancies, and a harmful effect on students' intrinsic motivation and graded performance (Elliot & Church, 1997). These findings were supported in a study with junior high students on achievement goals and motivation by Wolters (2004). This study found that students with a performance-avoidance orientation reported higher levels of disengagement from academic tasks, would give up easily on tasks, and display lower levels of motivation towards their schoolwork (Wolters, 2004). Another study by Elliot, McGregor, and Gable (1999) examined achievement goals on undergraduate students' study strategies and exam performance. Their results showed that performance-avoidance goals were positively related to disorganization, procrastination, and predicted negative exam performance. They also showed that students with performance-avoidance goals engaged in surface level processing skills, instead of the more adaptive method of deep processing. These two

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studies illustrate the negative academic outcomes that have been tied to the performance-approach goal orientation.

Significant Factors Involved Within the Achievement Goal Theory.

An early belief within the achievement goal theory was that students are characterized by adopting a single goal that they use within the academic environment for all of the tasks that they encounter (Meece & Holt, 1993). However, along with the revisions to the original achievement theory, a new idea was proposed about how goals actually function for students within the classroom. It has been suggested that instead of pursuing only one goal orientation, students tend to adopt multiple goals to fit their academic needs. According to Pintrich (2000), students employ both mastery and performance goals, along with varying levels of each goal orientation, in order to meet the demands that are placed on them within the classroom and that the use of multiple goals can produce different achievement and cognitive outcomes for students. This suggests that it is possible for students to have a combination of goals in their approach towards their schoolwork, and can experience varying academic outcomes that are dependent on their goal orientation combinations. Pintrich tested this multiple goal theory in his study on multiple goal orientations in student learning and achievement. Specifically, within his study he categorized the different goal orientation combinations into four separate groups. Students were classified into a high-mastery/high-performance, high-mastery/low-performance, low-mastery/high-performance, or low-mastery/low-performance, with each goal combination producing different academic outcomes. It was predicted that students with the high-mastery/low-performance combination would have the most adaptive academic outcomes for students, and the low-mastery/low-performance

having the most maladaptive outcomes. Results from this study showed that in reality, students with high-mastery/low-performance and high-mastery/high-performance did not differ significantly in their adaptive academic skill use, but instead showed similar positive academic patterns (Pintrich, 2000). On the contrary, students with a low-mastery/high-performance goal combination demonstrated a lack of adaptive skill use, and poor levels of motivation (Pintrich, 2000). These results suggest that performance goals do not always have negative academic consequences for students as the original achievement goal theory suggested, but instead can have positive outcomes if the performance goal is paired with a mastery goal. However, the research also affirms that if students are only concerned about their ability and how others perceive them (high performance) with no concern for mastery, then they are likely to encounter the maladaptive outcomes that the original theory discussed.

Another important contribution of Pintrich's multiple goal orientation was that it also showed how students could employ different goal orientations for different academic subjects (e.g., reading, math, history, etc.), and even for different assigned tasks. Students were more likely to be motivated and employ a mastery goal orientation towards their favorite classes or preferred academic tasks; whereas students were likely to utilize performance goals for classes or academic tasks that they do not enjoy or if they perceived a lack in their ability for that area (Gehlbach, 2006; Pintrich, 2000). This may appear to be fairly straightforward; however, it emphasizes the importance of incorporating student interests within the classroom and curriculum in order to increase their use of mastery goals and academic achievement within the learning environment.

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A final area that has received considerable research within the achievement goal theory is on the potential influence that teachers and their classrooms can have on students' personal goal orientations and motivational levels. There is growing evidence that teachers can actually project their preferred goal orientations onto students within their classroom (Wolters, 2004). This area of study within the achievement goal theory focuses on the goal structures of the classrooms. According to Wolters (2004), a goal structure is the type of achievement goal that is stressed through instructional methods and/or educational policies within the classroom or the entire school. Research on this area has identified two types of goal structures that can be emphasized within the classroom, and that are similar to the achievement theory's original goal orientations. First is the mastery goal structure, where the teacher and the instructional practices stress the importance in learning, trying hard, recognizes the value in all students, and teaches students that each one can be successful if they put in effort and hard work (Wolters, 2004). The second structure is the performance goal structure where the classroom or school environment indicates to students that being successful involves focusing on extrinsic rewards, demonstrating high ability, and doing better than others (Wolters, 2004). While Wolters (2004) has divided goal structures into two distinct types, he also suggested that the performance goal structure can be adapted to both performance-approach and performance-avoidance orientations.

The study by Wolters (2004) on goal structures sought to examine the relationship between goal structures and goal orientations, along with their influence on students' motivation, cognition, and their overall academic achievement. They sampled over 500 junior high school students and found that while students' personal reasons do have a

strong influence over their goal orientations, the goal structure of the classroom also plays a role in the type of achievement goal orientation that students adopt. Furthermore, their results showed that students reported a higher use of a personal mastery goal orientation when they viewed their own classroom instructional practices as a mastery structured environment (Wolters, 2004). Whereas when students viewed the classroom instruction as more of a performance structured environment, they tended to also adopt similar performance goals for themselves (Wolters, 2004). Thus, when evaluating students' goal orientations, it is essential to consider both student and classroom influences on goal orientations. These results add a new insight in to how goal orientations function within the academic environment for both students and teachers, along with indicating the impact that the classroom and instructional practices can have on students.

The achievement goal orientation theory is the most recent theory of academic motivation that has been offered to this date. While this theory is still relatively new, it has offered the field of motivation a new outlook in how goals, in combination with affect and cognitive processes, operate in regards to students' academic motivation. This theory has even been extended to include the relationship between goal orientations and classroom goal structures, along with describing the ability of students to endorse multiple goal combinations in order to best fit their educational needs. However, the achievement goal theory is not considered to be the complete and comprehensive approach to understanding student motivation; but instead, attempts to provide another unique, research-based opinion, in how students' motivation levels are impacted within the educational environment.

Achievement Goals and Middle School Students.

The majority of research within the achievement goal theory has focused upon examining goal orientations among undergraduate college students. Thus, there is a limited research base that is available within the achievement goal theory that examines the functioning of goal orientations among middle school students. While even though the research with the middle school population is rather limited, it is an interesting group to study due to the frequent transitions that middle school students' experience. Of the research that is available with the middle school population, much of it has attended to how achievement goals change as students' transition from elementary to middle school.

Across the vast field of motivation, studies have indicated that motivation begins to decline for individuals around the early adolescent era, which typically is around the middle school years (Anderman & Midgley, 1997; Shim et al., 2008). One technique researchers use to study this perceived decline in motivation is by examining the changes in goal orientations that students experience. Research has suggested that middle school students were more likely to encompass performance goals and less likely to utilize mastery goals, which was thought to be due to multiple factors (Anderman & Midgley, 1997). In order to examine this idea further, Anderman and Midgley (1997) sought to identify distinct changes in students' achievement goal orientations during their transition from elementary to middle school. They hypothesized that during the late elementary school years, students are more likely to endorse mastery goals and believe that their classrooms similarly support a mastery goal orientation. Whereas, when students transition to middle school, they were predicted to be more likely to adopt performance goals, along with perceiving their classrooms to support a performance goal orientation

(Anderman & Midgley, 1997). To test their hypotheses, they sampled 341 students during their fifth grade school year (late elementary school), and then again during their sixth grade school year (middle school) in order to examine how the transition impacts goal orientations among students. Their results were found to be in support of their hypotheses indicating that after students transitioned to middle school they were less likely to endorse mastery goals and more likely to adopt performance goals. Whereas when students were in late elementary school, they were found to engage in more mastery based goals over performance goals. Students also indicated that they perceived their classrooms to stress ability (performance goals) over mastery after they transitioned to middle school. Finally, their study also suggested that the transition from elementary to middle school can negatively impact the quality of learning for many students due to the changes in goal orientations among the students themselves, and also with the type of goal orientations that the classrooms itself supports (Anderman & Midgley, 1997). These results are significant as they add to the small, but growing, body of research involving goal orientations among middle school students.

A more recent study by Shim, Ryan, and Anderson (2008) also supported the change in students' academic goal orientations during the early adolescent years. They hypothesized that students would experience a decline in mastery goals and an increase in performance goals during their transition to middle school. They predicted this due to the growing concerns that research has indicated that motivation significantly declines during the middle school year for students and that the classrooms are considered to be one of the major influencers in this decline (Eccles, Lord, Roeser, Barber, & Jozefowicz, 1997; Pintrich, 2000; Shim et al., 2008). Shim and colleagues sampled 738 students during their

sixth and seventh grade school years, in order to sample the students at two different times to examine the impact of the middle school transition on the students' goal orientations. This study utilized the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey to examine achievement goal orientations among the middle school population. Their results showed that the students experienced a general decline in their achievement goals, regardless of the specific type that the students endorsed. More specifically, they found that the decline in academic goals was more prominent during the individual school year rather than across the two school years. Thus, the decline in academic goals occurred more from the fall to spring during the students' sixth grade year, with some stability during the period of spring of sixth grade to the fall of seventh grade, and then a continued decline from the fall to spring of students' seventh grade school year (Shim et al., 2008). These results suggest that the decline in student motivation and academic goals may not necessarily be due to the middle school transition, but may actually occur during the actual school year instead. The results from this study add to the growing research base involving achievement goals and middle school students; however, they also illustrate that there is a continued need for additional research within this area due to the lack of strong, consistent data regarding how the middle school transition really impacts students' achievement goals and their learning.

While middle school students are a growing interest within the achievement goal theory and the field of motivation itself, there is still a great amount of information that is unknown regarding this specific population. This could be due to the greater emphasis that has been placed on examining motivation among undergraduate college students. There is a need for more research with the middle school students in order to fully

understand the functioning of goal orientations with this group along with other key influential factors such as the classroom climate or teachers themselves, and how they may also impact students' achievement goals.

Achievement Goals and Gender

Similar to achievement goals and middle school students, there is a limited research base available regarding academic goal orientations and gender. With much of the achievement goal research focusing on the educational outcomes for the different goal orientations, very few studies have been dedicated to examining the impact and/or differences of gender on the different achievement goals. However, of the few studies that have evaluated gender and goal orientations, they have suggested that gender may play a significant role in the selection of achievement goals that students tend to adopt (Kenny-Benson, Pomerantz, Ryan, & Patrick, 2006).

While motivation differs from individual to individual, it also has been suggested to differ between males and females in regards to their levels of motivation for the different academic classes (Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, & Blumenfeld, 1993). In regards to achievement goals, research across various age levels has suggested that boys are more likely to endorse performance goals, whereas girls have been shown to adopt more mastery goals (Anderman & Midgley, 1997; Kenney-Benson et al., 2006; Shim, Ryan, & Anderson, 2008). Kenney-Benson and colleagues (2006) attempted to look at sex differences in goal orientations by examining how students approach their schoolwork. They first sampled students when they were in fifth grade, and then again in seventh grade in order to examine any changes in goal orientations or approach to schoolwork that may have occurred over time. They suggested that boys and girls take different

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approaches to how they handle and view their academic tasks, which may relate to the type of goal orientations that they also endorse. Girls tended to look at learning as more important, whereas boys were more concerned with ability and appearing smart to others (Kenney-Benson et al., 2006). Their study went on to further suggest that how boys and girls may approach schoolwork may stem from pre-determined social and biological factors which may influence boys and girls adoption of certain goal orientations (Kenney-Benson et al., 2006). This study is unique as it is one of the few studies that focused specifically on looking at sex differences in achievement and goal orientations among middle school students.

However, despite this information regarding gender and goal orientations, it needs to be interpreted with caution due to the small amount of research that is available within this area. In regards to gender, middle school students, and academic goals, the research base is even more limited to this group, hence the greater need for more research with this population. Thus, while this is still an emerging area within the achievement goal framework it still remains an area without conclusive evidence.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine goal orientations among early adolescent students and any potential differences that may arise between the students. Specifically, this study will determine if there is a difference between the developmental level of seventh and ninth grade students in their endorsement of particular achievement goals. The current literature that is available surrounding achievement goals has focused upon undergraduate students as a population for studying goal orientations; however, this study will examine a middle school population in order to gain new insights into how

achievement goals are adopted among early adolescent students. In addition to investigating the potential developmental differences in goal orientations, this study will also look for differences that may exist between males and females in their achievement goals.

The significance of this study on academic goal orientations can be demonstrated through a couple of main important points that have been highlighted from the motivational literature. The first is the idea that students' academic motivation tends to decline as they age and transition throughout their school years. According to Shim, Ryan, and Anderson (2008), students experience changes in their academic motivation, and the middle school level is the main area for where student's motivation begins to decline. They suggest that during the middle school years, students tend to transition from a mastery goal orientation to a more performance-approach based orientation (Shim et al., 2008). Other studies have also found evidence in support of this idea that students' academic motivation begins to decline, and that their goals tend to change and adapt to the more demanding academic environment (Anderman & Midgley, 1997 ; Gehlbach, 2006). Thus, with the research that is available on the middle school population, it seems as if a pattern has been identified in how students adopt achievement goal orientations to meet their current academic needs and/or demands. This is significant for the current study, in that the results will indicate whether or not middle school students do endorse more performance goals over mastery goals, and offer up potential reasons for why students are or are not motivated to complete their schoolwork.

Second, most of the research that is available regarding achievement goals has focused upon studying undergraduate or high school students. Minimal research has been

devoted to the middle school population, which leaves less to be known about achievement goals and this particular group. Thus, this study is significant in that it seeks to learn more information regarding achievement goal orientations among an understudied population. Results obtained from this study will be able to offer more insight into how achievement goals are adopted at the middle school level and provide educators with knowledge that they can use and incorporate within their classrooms to help facilitate more appropriate levels of learning among the students.

Finally, this study is significant in that it also examines the role that gender may or may not play in students' choice of achievement goals. Similar to research with the middle school population, few studies have examined exactly how gender functions in relation to students' goal orientations. The research on achievement goals focuses on the academic outcomes of the goals that students adopt, instead of examining the impact that other variables, such as gender, may have on students' goals. Results that are obtained from this study will help to indicate whether or not differences do exist between males and females in achievement goals, and the implication that gender differences may have for the classroom environment.

Overall, this study seeks to examine the implications of achievement goals within the middle school environment in order to help provide educators with further insight and information on academic goal orientations. In order to advance the research field on motivation and achievement goals, one must examine these variables through all ages, including the middle school years. By focusing on gender and developmental differences at the early adolescent educational level, this study will be able to provide new knowledge and impact middle school educational practices.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

The present study sought to examine any potential changes in motivation orientation over students' developmental level and gender. A between-groups research design was incorporated for the current study with the student's grade (i.e., seventh or ninth) and gender as the two independent variables and goal orientations (i.e., mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance) as the dependent variables.

Participants

Participants for the study were students enrolled at a suburban middle school in Minnesota. Three hundred and sixty eight students from the identified junior high school participated in the study. The selected junior high school encompassed grades seventh through ninth serving the students within the local town. The junior high school employs a 'house' method, and splits each grade in half and separates the students between the two designated 'houses' per grade. All students who were present on the day of data collection were included within the study, regardless if they are disabled or non-disabled. Students exempted from the present study were those whose parents returned the parent notification letter indicating that they did not want their child to participate in the study, or if the student independently selected not to participate.

Procedures

Before data was collected, the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse's Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the study. Parent notification was used to allow the students to participate. An informational letter was sent home to all seventh and ninth grade students' parents prior to the distribution of the survey (see Appendix A). The purpose of this letter was to inform parents regarding the purpose of the study, along with giving them an opportunity to sign and return the letter if they would not like for their child to participate. Students who were present in school the day the survey was distributed, and whose parents did not return the informational letter to opt their child out of the study, were given the opportunity to provide student assent to their participation prior to answering the survey questions. The students were told that the survey would not be graded, nor would they receive any negative consequences for choosing not to participate. Also, students were be told that the survey was designed to gain information on their motivation that they have towards school and their schoolwork.

Instruments

There are a number of surveys that were used to collect information in order to answer the research question. A self-report survey was distributed to both seventh and ninth grade students in order to sample their achievement goal orientations. At the end of the survey, qualitative questions were administered in order to gain any unique insights into students' motivational beliefs (see Appendix B). Demographic questions were also included to obtain the students' grade, gender, ethnicity, and age (see Appendix C).

Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS).

A 28-question survey specific to achievement goal motivation was used to measure students' achievement goal orientations and their perception of the classroom goal orientation (Midgley, Maehr, Hruda, E. Anderman, L. Anderman, Freeman et al., 2000). The self-report survey measured students' goals through a 5-point Likert type scale. For each of the items a student rated themselves with, 1 = "not at all true," 3 = "somewhat true," and 5 = "very true" to the statements that best represented them as a student (Midgley et al., 2000). This survey was selected because of its repeated use for assessing motivation with a variety of populations addressing mastery goals, performance-approach goals, and performance-avoidance goals.

The Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS) measured all three main types of achievement goals that students can adopt. In regards to mastery goals, five items assessed students' inclination for learning, development of competence and understanding, and for skill mastery (e.g., one of my goals in class is to learn as much as I can). For performance-approach goals, five items addressed students desire to outperform others, and to demonstrate their competence (e.g., it's important to me that I look smart compared to others in my class). Finally, for performance-avoidance goals, four items were used to examine students' desire to avoid any demonstration or feelings of incompetence or lack of ability in comparison to their peers (e.g., it's important to me that I don't look stupid in class).

The PALS survey also incorporated mastery goals, performance-approach goals, and performance-avoidance goals in surveying students' perceptions of their classroom goal orientations. Within the PALS survey, six items assessed the classroom mastery goal

structure, where students believed that the purpose for academic tasks were to increase ones' competence (e.g., in our class, really understanding the material is the main goal). For the performance-approach classroom goal structure, three items were included to measure students' belief that the purpose of academic tasks were to demonstrate ones' competence (e.g., in our class, getting good grades is the main goal). Finally, five items were included within the survey to measure the performance-avoidance classroom goal structure, where students believed that participation in academic tasks was to avoid displaying any levels of incompetence (e.g., in our class, it's important not to do worse than other students).

The original PALS survey was developed in 1997, and was sampled across nine different school districts within the Midwest area. The survey was distributed to students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and to students who were from a low-to middle- income level (Midgley et al., 2000). Students who participated in the original sampling were also ethnically diverse, with up to half of the sampled population being predominantly African American.

Since 1997, the survey has undergone many revisions and improvements in order for it to more directly measure the three goal orientations. With the new changes that were made to the PALS survey, validity and reliability of the measure were tested again in order to ensure that the scale is a reliable and valid assessment of achievement goal orientations. To account for reliability, internal consistencies were calculated for each goal orientation category. For the revised scale, the reliability for mastery goal orientation was .85, the performance-approach orientation was .89, and the performance-avoidance was .74 (Midgley et al., 2000). These reliabilities all fall within the acceptable range for

research purposes (Salvia, Ysseldyke, & Bolt, 2007). The authors conducted a confirmatory factor analysis for the 14 scale items, in order to determine if the items would fall into the three distinct goal orientation categories (i.e., mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance). The results that were obtained were very similar to those from the original survey, and did indicate that the survey items do load on separate factors.

When the PALS survey was revised in 1997, the authors added an additional 14 items to the survey to measure students' perceptions of their classroom goal orientations. To account for the newly added items, the authors reassessed the survey in order to affirm that the PALS survey is a reliable and valid measure of classroom achievement goals. For the revised scale, the reliability for classroom mastery goal structure was .76, the classroom performance-approach structure was .70, and the classroom performance-avoidance structure was .83 (Midgley et al., 2000). The authors also conducted a confirmatory factor analysis in order to validate the three distinct classroom goal orientation structures (mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance). The results from the factor analysis indicated that the additional 14 classroom goal structure items load into separate factors.

Hypotheses

HO_1: There will be no significant difference between seventh and ninth grade students, or between males and females, or an interaction between the independent variables in their goal orientation.

H_1: It is hypothesized that seventh grade students will be more inclined to endorse mastery goals than ninth grade students.

The independent variables for the present study included the students' grade (seventh and ninth grade) and gender (male or female). The dependent variables were the goal orientations of mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance. A 2 X 2 MANOVA was conducted to determine if any significant differences exist between the independent variables on the dependent variables. A level of significance was determined through $p < .05$.

HO$_2$: There is no correlation between students' goal orientation and students' perception of the classroom goal orientation.

H$_2$: It is hypothesized that there will be a positive relationship between students' goal orientation and perception of the classroom goal orientation.

A correlation matrix using Pearson's r was be developed using the three levels of an individual's goal orientation and the three levels of perceived classroom goal orientation. Significance of $p < .05$ was used to determine significant relationships.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

The purpose of the present study was to evaluate achievement goal orientations among middle school students, and to determine if any differences exist between students developmental level and gender in their adoption of achievement goals within the school setting. This was done by surveying seventh and ninth grade students with the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS) as developed by Midgley et al. (2000) who attended a suburban junior high school in Minnesota. The following is a summary of the results that were obtained from the study.

Demographics

The study sample was comprised of 368 students (181 seventh grade students and 165 ninth grade students) from a suburban junior high school in Minnesota. Ages of the students ranged from 12 to 16 years old ($M = 13.43$, $SD = 1.11$). Of the sampled students, 172 were male and 174 were female. Students who were sampled were from diverse ethnic backgrounds with 244 Caucasian, 30 Hispanic, 16 African-American, 13 Asian, and 42 with an 'Other' ethnic background. The study sampled 368 out of a total of 485 seventh and ninth grade students from the selected junior high school. Out of the 485 total seventh and ninth grade students from the selected junior high, 15 students selected independently not to participate in the survey. Five students did not receive a survey or

participate due to the parent notification letter being returned to the school indicating that the parent(s) or guardian(s) did not want their child to participate in the survey. Overall, a 76% response rate was obtained for the seventh and ninth grade students who were sampled for the study. The number and percent of seventh and ninth grade students along with the percent and number of students' gender are provided within Table 1.

Table 1. Percent of Sampled Students' Grade and Gender

Students' Gender	Students' Grade	
	Seventh	Ninth
Male	n = 96	n = 76
	% = 26	% = 21
Female	n = 85	n = 89
	% = 23	% = 24

Survey Results

Upon analyzing the survey data, Cronbach's Alpha was computed for each of the three achievement goal orientations (i.e., mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance) to compare the obtained reliabilities from Midgley et al. (2000) PALS survey. The comparison data for the internal consistency values is provided in Table 2. The reliabilities that were obtained from the present study were all lower than the reliabilities that were obtained from the revised PALS scale. The mean and standard deviation scores for the items taken from the PALS survey for student and class goal orientations along with the overall scale scores are provided within Table 3. In examining the mean scores for the student goal orientation there was a significant difference across

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mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance, $F(2, 736) = 280$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .43$. A post hoc comparison using a Bonferroni pairwise comparison method indicated that all three scores were significantly different from each other. This means that the goal orientations of mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance were distinct orientations from each other in regards to students' personal achievement goals. The mean scores for the class goal orientation also revealed a significant difference across mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance, $F(2, 736) = 377$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .51$. A post hoc comparison using a Bonferroni pairwise comparison method indicated that all three scores were significantly different from each other. This means that the goal orientations of mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance were found to be distinct from one another for the class goal orientations.

Table 2. Reliability Comparison Data Between the Present Study and Those Reported by Midgley et al. (2000).

	Cronbach's Alpha	
Goal Orientation	Current Study	Midgley et al. (2000)
Mastery	.82	.85
Performance-Approach	.85	.89
Performance- Avoidance	.62	.74

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviations for Survey Items for Student and Class Goal

Orientations

Scale	Student Orientation			Class Orientation		
	Items	Item M	Item SD	Items	Item M	Item SD
Mastery	5	4.00	.73	6	4.06	.68
Performance-Approach	5	2.97	.90	3	3.84	.87
Performance-Avoidance	4	3.15	.85	5	2.71	1.02

Prior to examining the research question, it was important to first examine

whether there was an impact of the different subject types (i.e., English, Math, Social

Studies, and Science) on student goal orientation and/or class orientation. For the student

orientation there was no significant main effect of the different subject types, F (9, 1092)

= 1.02, p > .05, η^2 = .01. Based on this result, subsequent analysis on student orientation

did not separate the data by the subject type in addition to the other variables of interest

to this study. For the class orientation there was a significant main effect on the subject

type, F (9, 1092) = 3.00, p < .05, η^2 = .02. There was no significant difference on the

performance-approach orientation, F (3, 364) = .33, p > .05, η^2 = .00. There was no

significant difference on the performance-avoidance orientation, F (3, 364) = .68, p > .05,

η^2 = .01. There was a significant difference on the mastery goal orientation, F (3, 364) =

7.40, p < .05, η^2 = .06. A Student-Newman-Keuls post hoc analysis revealed that English

and Science were significantly lower than Math and Social Studies (see Table 4). Based

on this result, subsequent analysis of the class orientation will not consider subject type

when analyzing the mastery orientation for the class perspective. This means that

students perceived their math and social studies classes to be more mastery oriented than their English and science classes.

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations Found for the Four Different Subject Types.

Subject Type	N	M	SD
English	85	3.88	.75
Science	83	3.89	.79
Math	108	4.21	.59
Social Studies	92	4.21	.52

A 2 X 2 MANOVA was used to test for any potential significant differences between students' developmental level and/or gender in their endorsement of achievement goals within the school system. There was a significant main effect for gender, $F(3, 340) = 4.00, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$. There was no significant effect for grade, $F(3, 340) = 0.90, p > .05, \eta^2 = .01$. There was no significant effect for an interaction for gender and grade, $F(3, 340) = 2.33, p > .05, \eta^2 = .02$. Looking within the gender factor and student perceptions of goal orientation, there was a significant effect for Performance Approach, $F(1, 342) = 7.77, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$. There was no significant effect for Performance Avoidance, $F(1, 342) = .51, p > .05, \eta^2 = .00$ and no effect for Mastery, $F(1, 342) = .04, p > .05, \eta^2 = .00$. Boys were more likely to use performance approach strategies than girls (see Figure 1).
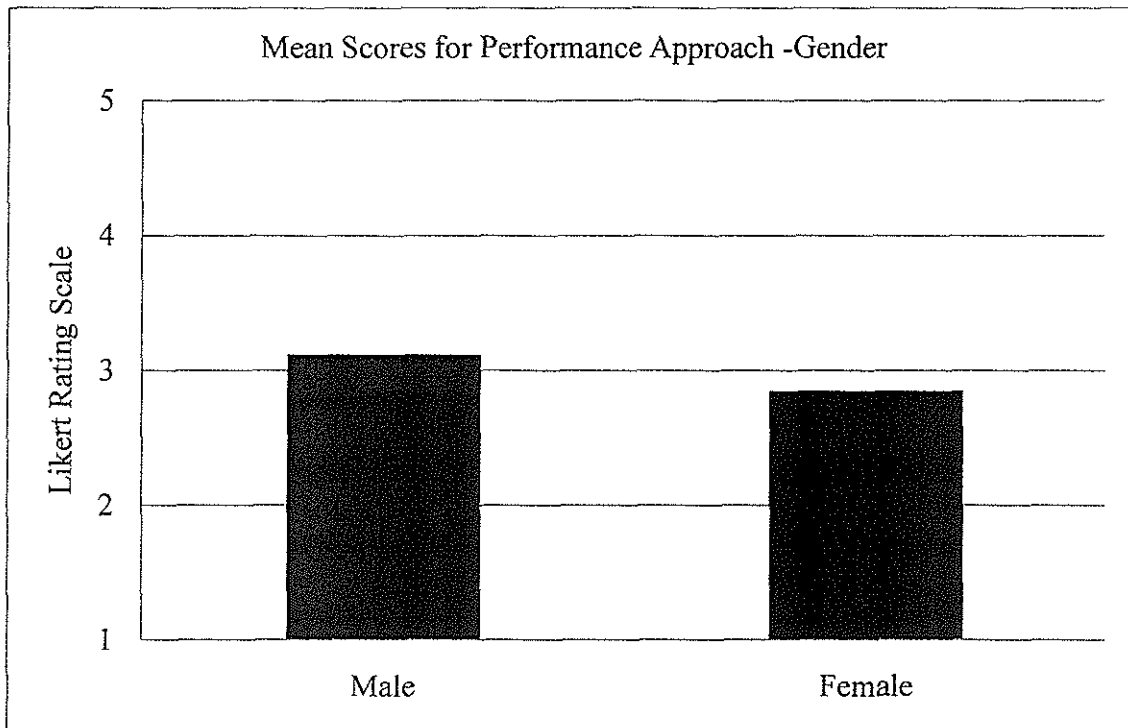
Figure 1. Gender Mean Scores for the Performance-Approach Goal Orientation

Second, a 2 X 2 MANOVA was run to determine to test for any significant differences between students' developmental level and/or gender in their perceptions of class goal orientations within the middle school system. Only performance-approach and performance-avoidance goal orientations were considered at this time, as there was a significant impact of mastery goal orientation based on the subject type. A significant main effect was found for students' gender, $F(2, 341) = 3.75, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$. There was no significant effect found for students' grade, $F(2, 341) = .78, p > .05, \eta^2 = .01$. There was no significant effect for an interaction between students' grade and gender, $F(2, 341) = 1.61, p > .05, \eta^2 = .01$. This means that there was a difference between boys

and girls in their perception of classroom goal orientation for the performance-approach and performance-avoidance orientations.

Based on the significant main effect between students' gender and perception of class goal orientations, the impact on the specific orientation was more closely examined. A significant effect was found for the class performance-approach goal orientation, F (1, 342) = 4.19, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$, and the class performance-avoidance goal orientation, F (1, 342) = 6.88, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Boys perceived their class to be performance-approach oriented or performance-avoidance oriented than girls (see Figure 2).
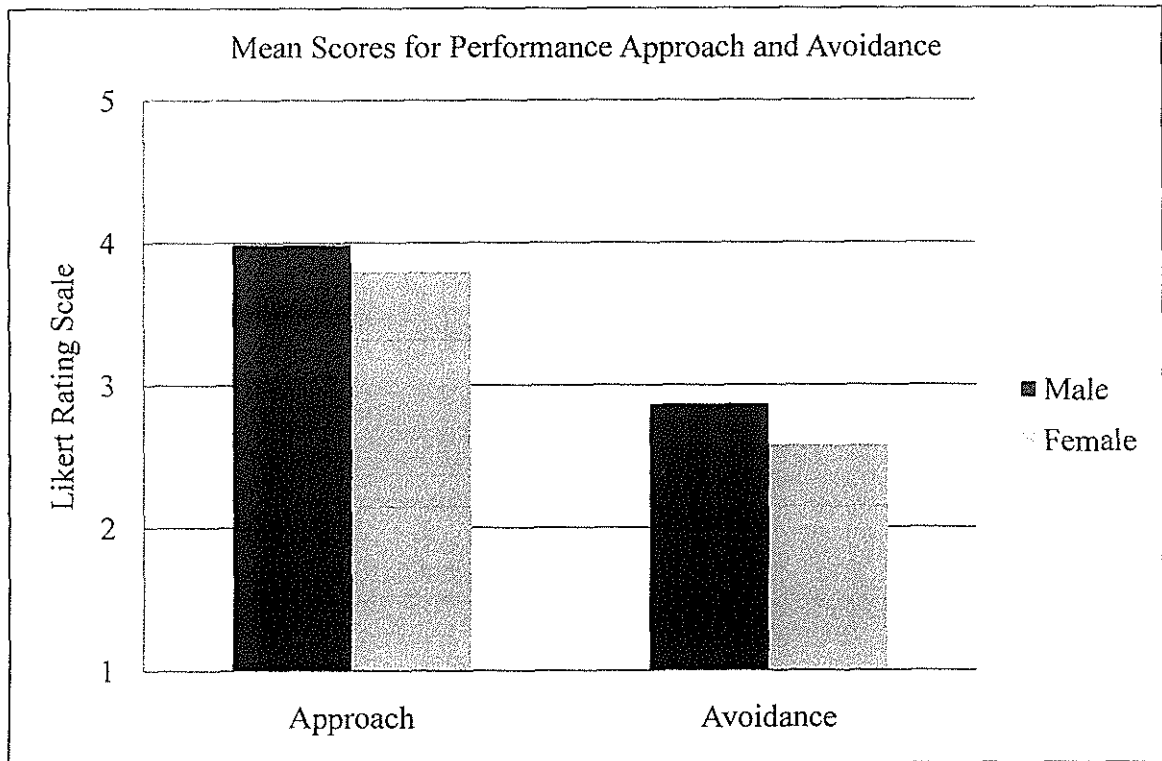
Figure 2. Gender Mean Scores for Students' Perception of Class Performance-Approach and Class Performance-Avoidance Goal Orientations

A 2 X 2 X 4 ANOVA was run to test for significance between students' gender, grade, and subject type. A significant main effect was found for the subject type (i.e.,

English, Math, Social Studies, and Science) on students' perception of class mastery goal orientations, $F(3, 330) = 5.96$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$. There were no significant main effects for grade level, $F(1, 330) = 1.48$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .00$, nor gender, $F(1, 330) = 2.55$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$ on class mastery goal orientation. There were no significant interactions for any of the combinations:

a) Grade by gender, $F(1, 330) = 2.30$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$,

b) Grade by subject type, $F(3, 330) = .14$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .00$,

c) Gender by subject type, $F(3, 330) = .38$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .00$, and

d) Grade by gender by subject type, $F(3, 330) = .60$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$.

A table displaying the means and standard deviations for the different subject types was already provided in Table 4.

A correlational matrix was developed using Pearson's r to analyze the relationship between students' personal achievement goals and their perceptions of class goal orientations. Based on the correlational data, students' personal achievement goals correlated positively to their perceptions of classroom goal orientations for the mastery and performance-avoidance goal orientations. However, the performance-approach goal orientation was the only goal orientation that correlated negatively between students' personal orientation and their perception of the classroom goal orientation. These results are provided within Table 5. The amount of variance between students' mastery goal orientation and their perception of class mastery orientation was calculated and found to be less than 10%.

Table 5. Correlation Coefficients Between Student and Class Goal Orientations

	C. Performance Approach	C. Performance Avoidance	C. Mastery
S. Performance Approach	-.40	.33[*]	.38[*]
S. Performance Avoidance		.31[*]	.37[*]
S. Mastery			.28[*]

Note. S. denotes students' personal goal orientations and C. denotes class goal orientations
[*] = Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1 tailed)

Qualitative Questions

Three open ended qualitative questions were included at the end of the 28-item

PALS goal orientation measure. Out of the 368 students who completed the 28-item goal

orientation survey, 10 students did not answer any of the qualitative questions and five

students answered only one or two out of the three qualitative questions. A frequency

count was performed on students' responses for each of the three qualitative questions.

Responses were then categorized into the different ideas that students' responses

projected. The five most frequent responses for each qualitative question are provided

within Tables 6-8.

Responses to the first qualitative question of ("What makes you want to complete

your schoolwork?") can be seen in Table 6. Grades and students' future college and/or

job were the two most frequently reported answers by students in response to this

question suggesting a strong support for the performance-approach orientation. This

answer is conflicting to the data that was found by the PALS survey which suggested that

a majority of students who were sampled held mastery oriented goals over performance-

approach or performance-avoidance goals. Students also reported a mastery statement in

response to this question stating that some do want to understand, learn, and be

successful. However, the performance-approach orientation overwhelmingly overpowered the mastery statement made by students in an estimated 8:1 response ratio. Student responses to the second qualitative question ("When is it hard for you to want to complete your schoolwork?") can be seen in Table 7. Students reported that when schoolwork is difficult as the most frequent response to this question. When evaluating students' responses to this question, it appears that students experience internal and external reasons for when it is hard for them to complete their schoolwork. This suggests that schoolwork can be a product of both the students' personal characteristics and the environment. Students' responses to the third qualitative question ("What could teachers do to help you want to complete your schoolwork?") can be seen in Table 8. A majority of students' reported that teachers could help them want to complete their motivation by making schoolwork fun and interesting for them, along with explaining the work more thoroughly. This finding shows support for the mastery orientation that was found by the survey data, and suggests that students have the desire to learn and understand the material that is being taught to them. Finally, a complete list of students' responses to each of the three qualitative questions can be found in Appendices D, E, and F.

Table 6. Students' Responses to the First Qualitative Question

What makes you want to complete your schoolwork?

Response	N	Percent
Grades (getting good grades or avoiding bad grades)	131	36.90%
For future college or job	79	22.25%
My parents	32	9.01%
To understand, learn, or be successful	27	7.61%
To pass	16	4.51%

Note. Responses are listed in descending order starting with the most frequent response.

Table 7. Students' Responses to the Second Qualitative Question

When is it hard for you to want to complete your schoolwork?

Response	N	Percent
When it is difficult	65	18.21%
When I'm distracted	47	13.17%
When I want to do other things, or I am busy	39	10.92%
When I want to hang out with friends	28	7.84%
When I am tired	26	7.28%

Note. Responses are listed in descending order starting with the most frequent response.

Table 8. Students' Responses to the Third Qualitative Question

What could teachers do to help you want to complete your schoolwork?		
Response	N	Percent
Make schoolwork fun and interesting	54	15.21%
Explain the work more thoroughly	53	14.93%
Nothing	38	10.70%
Give less homework	34	9.58%
Give us more time in class	23	6.48%

Note. Responses are listed in descending order starting with the most frequent response.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The present study sought to expand upon the goal orientation motivational research by investigating possible differences between middle school students' gender or grade level in regards to their goal orientation beliefs. Another goal of the study was to evaluate the relationship between student's personal goal orientations and their perceptions of the goals that are projected within the classroom environment. First, a comparison of the survey reliabilities will be discussed in regards to the reliabilities that were obtained for the present study and those that were reported by Midgley et al. (2000). Next, a discussion of the obtained study results in regards to the proposed hypotheses will take place, along with an analysis of student's responses to the three qualitative questions. Following will be the study's limitations will be highlighted and discussed. Finally, a discussion of the implications for the schools and field of school psychology will be provided.

The goal orientations of mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance were assessed using the Midgley et al. (2000) Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS). In the revised PALS survey, researchers found the internal consistency values of the three goal orientations to range between .74 - .89, whereas the present study obtained Cronbach's Alpha values between .62 - .85. The performance-approach and mastery internal consistency values found for the present study are consistent with those

reported in the PALS survey; however, the performance-avoidance internal consistency value was found to be lower than the original value that was reported by Midgley et al. (2000). The obtained reliabilities for the present study are considered to be within the acceptable range for research purposes. Although the internal consistency values are considered to be appropriate for research purposes, they are not considered in the acceptable range for making decisions for individual students. One potential explanation for obtaining lower internal consistency values could be due to the 10 year difference between the revision of the PALS survey and the present survey. For example, students may hold educational values that are distinct to their generation, engage in different learning expectations than students 10 years ago, and the overall school climate may be different than when the PALS survey was revised. In spite of the internal consistency values and how they compare to Midgley et al. (2000) survey, the results can be interpreted as reliable for measuring goal orientations among middle school students.

The first hypothesis that was tested predicted that seventh grade students would be more likely to endorse mastery goals than ninth grade students in their personal goal orientations. This hypothesis was not supported, as there were no grade differences found between students in their personal goal orientations. One explanation for why no developmental differences were found in students' achievement goals could be due to the idea that students can adopt multiple goal orientations, that goal orientations tend to change over the course of the school year, and that students tend to adapt their goal orientation beliefs to meet their educational needs (Pintrich, 2000; Shim et al., 2008). Due to this continual change in goal orientation beliefs, students' may be less likely to show differences between grade level in their personal goal orientations. Also,

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longitudinal studies have suggested that the transition between elementary and middle school can result in a negative impact on students' learning as students tend to change from a mastery orientation to a performance-based orientation (Anderman & Midgley, 1997). However, it is possible that this transition is not entirely maladaptive on students' learning. Research suggests that students frequently will alter their achievement goals to meet the demands of the educational environment (Pintrich, 2000; Shim et al., 2008). This adaptation could be considered to be quite adaptive for the students learning in that they are changing their achievement goals in order to meet the new academic demands of the middle school environment.

Another potential explanation for the lack of grade difference in goal orientation beliefs could be due to idea that students are more likely to adopt performance-based goals (i.e., performance-approach or performance-avoidance) over mastery goals during the middle school years (Anderman & Midgley, 1997). However, the present study did not find support for this idea and actually found students to be more mastery oriented than they were performance-approach or performance-avoidance oriented. This finding is not consistent with the available literature on achievement goals and middle school students, and suggests that this is an area within the theory that is in need of future research in order to address if middle school students are more likely to adopt a particular goal orientation over the others.

A final explanation for the lack of grade differences in students' achievement goals could be due to the PALS survey that was used to measure students' achievement goals. It is possible that the measure was not sensitive enough to pick up on grade differences between goal orientations. If another goal orientation measure was used

would a difference between students' grade have emerged? Of the research that is available on goal orientation and middle school students, a majority of it has focused on the changes in students' goal orientations across the school year or during the transition between elementary and junior high school (Anderman & Midgley, 1997; Shim et al., 2008). Few studies to date have examined differences between students' grade levels and goal orientation beliefs. Developmental differences in students' personal goal orientations is an area within the achievement goal theory in need of future research, especially with the middle school population.

Research on students' academic motivation has suggested that students' level of motivation tends to decline during the middle school years, and that students tend to adopt more performance-based goals over mastery goals (Shim et al., 2008). One interesting finding from the present study was that students were found to be more mastery oriented than they were performance-approach or performance-avoidance oriented. This finding is not consistent with the research on achievement goals and middle school students. One possible explanation to this finding could be related to the characteristics of the sampled school. The majority of students who attend the school come from affluent, middle-class families who strongly promote learning and academic achievement within their families. Students from these families may hold high internal values on learning as they know it is important for their future (i.e., college or professional job) and to be academically successful. Also, the school is currently promoting a motivation initiative within the school to try and increase students' motivation levels. Due to this initiative, teachers may be focused on promoting learning

and academic motivation within their classrooms and using high-quality teaching practices to support student learning.

Although no grade differences were found between seventh and ninth grade students, a gender difference was found in students' personal achievement goal orientations. Boys were more likely to adopt performance-approach goals in their approach to schoolwork than girls were. This finding is supported throughout the literature that is available on achievement goals and gender differences (Anderman & Midgley, 1997; Kenney-Benson et al., 2006; Shim, Ryan, & Anderson, 2008). There are several possible explanations for this finding. First, gender differences in goal orientation beliefs could be due to the approach that students take for their schoolwork. Research has suggested that boys and girls differ in their beliefs, attitudes, and approach toward academic tasks (Kenney-Benson et al., 2006). This idea leads to the second possible explanation for why boys were more likely to hold performance-approach goals than girls. It is possible that boys and girls adhere to the gender stereotypes that they have been labeled with. For example, in the school environment, boys have been predicted to be more concerned with demonstrating their ability and competence level to others, whereas girls are focused on learning and understanding the material they are being taught (Kenney-Benson et al., 2006). As students with performance-approach goals are concerned with attaining positive judgments from others, outperforming others, demonstrating ability levels, and receiving good grades, it would only make sense that boys would be higher in the performance-approach orientation. Even though the present study did not hypothesize gender differences in achievement goals, it does extend the research that is available on middle school students, gender differences, and goal

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orientation beliefs. However, it is still recommended that further research be conducted within this area to further establish the present study's results and the information that is available on gender differences and achievement goals.

The second hypothesis that was tested predicted a positive relationship between students' personal achievement goals and their perception of the classroom goal orientations. This hypothesis was supported in that a small positive relationship was found between the class performance-avoidance and mastery goal orientations; however, the performance-approach goal orientation yielded a negative relationship between students' personal goal and their perception of the classroom goal orientation. Although a positive relationship was found between students' personal achievement goals and their perception of classroom goals, the study did anticipate a stronger positive relationship to have been found. This finding suggests that there could be other factors involved that are influencing students' personal achievement goal orientations. This idea will be discussed further as a concluding point in the discussion. However, the small relationship that was found between students' personal achievement goals and their perceptions of class goal orientations, with the exception of the performance-approach goal orientation, has been supported throughout the literature that is available on students and class goal orientations (Wolters, 2004). Research suggests that students are likely to hold goal orientation beliefs that reflect those that their teachers promote regardless of whether it is a mastery, performance-approach, or performance-avoidance orientation (Wolters, 2004). The findings from the present study extend the research base within the area of classroom goal structures in providing small support for a positive relationship between students' personal achievement goals and perceptions of classroom goal orientations.

While the results that were obtained from the present study align with the available research on class goal orientations, the negative relationship that was found between students' personal achievement goals and their perceptions of the classroom goals for the performance-approach orientation has not been produced or highlighted in past literature. This was an unexpected finding by the present study and therefore deserves additional examination into why this negative relationship was found for the performance-approach orientation and what this may mean. The negative correlation suggests that students' who are high in performance-approach orientation beliefs are less likely to view their classroom as promoting performance-approach goals. A possible explanation to this finding could be that the more students perceive their classrooms to be emphasizing performance-approach goals they may be more likely to disengage from this practice and therefore have lower performance-approach expectations. This idea is beyond the scope of the present study but could be a direction for future research. A second explanation for this finding could be due to the school characteristics. The school that the students were sampled from is considered to be a moderately affluent community, employs highly qualified teachers, and was also promoting a school-wide motivation initiative at the time that the students were sampled. It is possible that due to the combination of the school characteristic factors the teachers were highly promoting, whether consciously or unconsciously, the mastery or performance-avoidance goal orientations and de-emphasizing performance-approach goals. Students would then be less likely to view their classroom goal orientations as performance-approach based, and relate to the negative relationship that was found between students' personal goals and their perceptions of the classroom goals for the performance-approach orientation. If this

were to be true, it would mean that students whose personal goals are either mastery or performance-avoidance perceive their teachers to be promoting learning, understanding and mastery of the material, or to be promoting the avoidance of looking incompetent in front of one's peers.

A final investigation was regarding the impact the subject type had on students' personal goals and their perceptions of the class goal orientations (i.e., English, math, social studies, and science). This was done in order to investigate the idea that students' motivation is an unstable trait that changes with the context and/or situation that the student is exposed to (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). While the subject type that was given to students did not have an impact on students' personal achievement goals, the study did appear to have an impact between the subject type and students' perception of the classroom mastery goal orientation. For the class mastery goal orientation, the subject types of English and science were aligned together while math and social studies were found to go together. Students' viewed their math and social studies classes as more mastery goal oriented than their English and science classes. This was an unexpected finding as it would be predicted that English and social studies would line up together based on the nature of the classes (i.e., literature-based, essay responses, etc.) and math and science would align with each other (i.e., emphasis on the scientific method, use of numbers, etc.). With an understanding of the influence of classroom goals on students' personal achievement goals, it is possible that the students who were sampled would hold mastery goals in their math and social studies classes, and performance-approach or performance-avoidance oriented goals in their English and science classes. It is also possible that the content involved in the four different academic subjects related to the

coupling of English and science together and math and social studies together. The content that is involved with the four different academic subjects may differ in their level of mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance orientation, with students viewing the content within certain subjects being more mastery oriented than the other two orientations. This would support the idea that students are differentially motivated within each distinct academic subject.

A second possible explanation for the coupling of English and science and math and social studies may relate to the impact of the teacher and course orientation of the academic course. The academic courses of English and science tend to be categorized as being process oriented, where the class content is commonly student directed. This means that within English and science classes students are focused on the process needed to learn the material and complete the academic assignments. Thus, it is up to the students to make meaning out of what is being taught to them, and to transfer that meaning to the completion of their academic assignments. Opposite of this perspective is the factual oriented approach where the course is primarily teacher directed and product oriented. This approach has commonly been linked to the academic courses of math and social studies. This means that within math and social studies classes students are focused on the outcome or product, and in order to successfully attain that outcome or product (i.e., completion of academic task) students must master the material that is being taught to them. This idea would then help to explain why the academic courses of math and social studies were perceived by students to be more mastery oriented than English and science classes. Thus, these variations in academic course orientation could possibly relate to the

differences in mastery class orientation that was perceived by students within their English, science, math, and social studies classes.

The evaluation of the impact of academic subject on achievement goals is a new area within the achievement goal theory; however, when achievement goals are assessed among students, researchers typically have sampled students in math or English (Pintrich, 2000; Shim et al., 2008; Wolters, 2004; Wolters & Yu, 1996). This could be due to the idea that both educators and students alike tend to place the different academic subjects into a hierarchy of importance where some subjects are viewed as more important than others (Gehlbach, 2006). Thus, if some subjects, such as English and math, are viewed as more important they may be more likely to be sampled for research purposes when it comes to students and achievement goal orientations. It is also possible that the students' opinions of the individual teacher who is instructing the class they were sampled in had an influence over their perception of the classroom goal orientation(s). Students who held positive opinions for their teacher could have viewed the content and learning within that class as important, which would have reflected in positive ratings of the teacher. Reflecting upon the data from the present study, it is possible that students who were surveyed in math and social studies held more positive opinions regarding their teacher than the students who were surveyed in English and science. While it is important to examine the structure and content within the different academic subjects students are involved in, it is equally important to look at students' personal opinions of the teacher and how those opinions influence their perception of class goal orientations.

Three qualitative questions were included at the end of the survey to assess students' personal opinions regarding motivation and their schoolwork. The first question

sought to identify factors that motivate students to complete their schoolwork. Grades were identified as the most frequent response that students provided. The desire for good grades falls under the performance-approach goal orientation, and considers the student to be more extrinsically motivated as they tend to be focused on attaining good grades, receiving positive judgment from others, and/or demonstrating their competence level within the school environment. This idea is highly supported within the literature, as it has been suggested that middle school students are more likely to endorse performance-approach goals over mastery goals (Anderman & Midgley, 1997; Shim et al., 2008). However, this response that students gave does not match the data that were found through the PALS survey. Students were found to be more mastery oriented than they were performance-approach or performance-avoidance oriented. Both findings suggest that students want to learn and have a desire to understand the material; however, they also view grades as important. Pintrich (2000) would interpret this finding as in support of his idea that students hold multiple goal orientations to fit their educational needs. Thus, even though the study found students to be more mastery oriented, it is possible that they hold performance-approach oriented beliefs in their approach to schoolwork.

The second most frequent response that students provided was that they are motivated to complete their schoolwork for their future college and/or job that they will have. This idea suggests that students know that they must complete their schoolwork in order to attend a college of their choice or have more options when it comes to finding a job. Similar to the first response students provided, this response reflects a performance-avoidance orientation in that students are more concerned over being academically successful in order to do well in their future instead of being more concerned with

learning and understanding. This idea does not reflect the mastery goal orientation that the study found students to be in support of.

The second qualitative question looked at the different factors that make it difficult for students to want to complete their schoolwork. Students indicated that when their schoolwork is hard it is difficult for them to want to complete it. This was cited as the most frequent student response to this question. It is possible that when students view their schoolwork as being difficult they are unmotivated to complete it due to a lack of understanding of either the concepts that were taught or what they are supposed to do to complete the assignment. Students' perception of task difficulty relates back to students' sense of self-efficacy towards tasks, an idea that was discussed within the expectancy-value and social cognitive theory. Students with low levels of self-efficacy towards academic tasks may be more likely to view the schoolwork as difficult and be less motivated to complete it. In contrast, students with high levels of self-efficacy may have higher levels of motivation to complete their schoolwork as they may be less likely to view their work as difficult. Students also reported that it is difficult for them to want to complete their schoolwork when they are distracted as the second most frequent response. When students are distracted they are unable to maintain their focus on the material that is being taught, or have difficulty with remaining on-task in order to complete the assignment. The issue of distraction could also influence the students' perception of task difficulty. If students are distracted and miss the lesson or directions for the assignment, they are more likely to perceive the schoolwork as being difficult than those students who were able to remain focused and block out distractions. Both ideas that students reported reflect the idea that students experience internal and external

factors that function together to produce their overall levels of motivation towards completing their schoolwork. This reflection supports the idea that students' motivation levels are a product of multiple factors that combine together to produce their overall formation of achievement goals and level of motivation that they have towards school.

The final qualitative question asked students what their teachers could do to help them want to complete their schoolwork. Students reported that making schoolwork fun and interesting, and explaining the work more thoroughly as the top two most frequent responses. By teachers explaining the work more thoroughly to the students, it is possible that the students would be less likely to view the schoolwork as difficult and may make them more motivated to complete the work. Also, making school assignments or activities fun and interesting could help to not only get students excited about learning, but also motivate them to complete their schoolwork. Academic tasks that spark interest in students was an idea explained within the expectancy value theory through the concept of task values. Students who are interested in academic tasks will be more likely to place a higher value on the task and be more motivated to complete the task than schoolwork that students' perceive to be boring and uninteresting (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Wigfield, 1994). Thus, teachers should attempt to modify or create assignments that spark students' interests in order to encourage and support students' motivation towards their academic tasks. Finally, the ideas of making schoolwork fun and interesting and explaining the work more thoroughly that students expressed suggests that they have a desire to learn and understand the material that is being taught, which is very much aligned with the mastery goal orientation within the achievement goal theory. This also

would align with the present study's finding that students appeared to be more mastery oriented than they were performance-approach or performance-avoidance oriented.

Overall the responses that students provided to the three qualitative questions allowed for an examination into their opinions of what motivates them to complete their schoolwork, factors that make it difficult for them to complete their work, and to offer up ideas of what teachers could do to help them to want to complete their schoolwork. It is important to interpret students' responses to the three qualitative questions with caution as no statistical analyses were run to test for any significance or relationships. The three qualitative questions were included within the study in order to gain additional insight into students' motivation towards their schoolwork, and how students' ideas reflect the findings that were gained from the PALS measure.

Study Limitations

While the present study sought to expand the research base and knowledge regarding students' personal achievement goals and perceptions of classroom goal orientations, it is not without its limitations. First, it is important to discuss the school that the student population was sampled from. Students were sampled from a junior high school that serves students in grades seventh through ninth. This is due to the large student population that the school district serves. While this junior high setting may be common for highly populated urban areas, it may be atypical of what grades the traditional junior high, or middle school, typically serves. Within the Midwest, it is common for middle schools to encompass grades sixth through eighth, with ninth grade as the first year of high school. Another issue that is related to the difference between the sampled junior high school and a more typical middle school surrounds the question of

whether ninth grade is considered to be at a junior high level or more of a high school level.

A second limitation to the study relates to the time when the students were sampled. Research has suggested that students' achievement goals not only change when they transition between different levels of schooling (i.e., elementary to middle, middle to high school), but they can also change during the academic school year (Gehlbach, 2006; Shim et al., 2008). The present study was a cross-sectional design that sampled students once during the middle of the academic year, and did not sample students across the school year. It is possible that at the time students were sampled their personal goal orientations were different than the ones that they held at the beginning of the year or the ones they hold by the end of the school year. The present study would not have been able to detect these changes, and was instead more focused at looking at students' goal orientations at the single time they were sampled. Due to this limitation, it is recommended that teachers keep in mind the amount of change that students can experience in their achievement goals and level of motivation toward their schoolwork, and alter their teaching methods and assignments to meet the students' needs and interests in order to provide continual support for their motivation throughout the school year.

A third limitation to the present study relates to the small positive relationship that was found between students' personal achievement goal orientations and their perception of the classroom goal orientations. The study originally anticipated that a stronger relationship would have been found between the two variables. It is possible that only a small positive relationship was found because the study sampled students' perceptions of

classroom goal orientations, and did not sample the teachers' personal perceptions of their classroom goal orientations. By sampling students and teachers independently when assessing the relationship between students' achievement goals and classroom goal structures it is possible that a stronger relationship would have been found. This finding would have also been able to provide stronger support for the idea that teachers' classroom goal orientations can positively influence students' personal achievement goals that has been highlighted throughout the literature.

A final limitation to the study relates to the sensitivity of the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS) that was used to measure achievement goals and classroom goal orientations with the present study. As the measure was revised and re-normed 10 years ago it may not be sensitive enough for current standards to assess for differences in achievement goal orientations between students' grade level. Student characteristics, educational behaviors, and/or importance or meaning of education may be different from what it was 10 years ago, and the PALS survey may not have been adequate enough to account for those changes. The PALS survey was also thought to be a socially desirable survey in that the wording of questions may have influenced students to respond in a manner that they felt was what educators wanted to hear. For example, the results from the study indicated that students who were sampled were higher in mastery goals than performance-approach or performance-avoidance goals, even though this finding is not consistent with the literature on achievement goals and middle school students. It is possible that the way the survey was worded influenced students' responses, which in turn, related to the finding that students were higher in mastery goals than performance-approach or performance-avoidance goals.

Implications for Education and School Psychology

Results from the present study add to the research within the achievement goal theory, extends the literature and knowledge on achievement goals among middle school students, and provides implications for the fields of education and school psychology. First, it is important to re-address the question of who is responsible for student motivation. Results from the present study indicated support for the idea that students' academic motivation is a product of their individual traits; however, it is also influenced by their academic environment that they are involved in. The present study found that teachers can have a slight positive influence on students' achievement goals. Due to this, there is a need for teachers to recognize the influence that their classroom goals can have a slight influence on students' personal achievement goals. Keeping this idea in mind teachers can promote the more adaptive goal orientations (mastery and performance-approach) and de-emphasize the maladaptive goal orientation (performance-avoidance). It is also recommended that teachers recognize that they may not be able to entirely change or fully influence students' motivational levels due to their inability to change the personality traits that may influence students' motivation. They should instead focus on how their classroom and the overall school environment influences and supports students' academic motivation levels. Teachers should recognize that students can adopt multiple goals, and that students can vary considerable from one another in their achievement goals they have towards the academic environment. Teachers should attempt to address this by offering students diverse opportunities with schoolwork to demonstrate their knowledge. This would help to meet the individual students' achievement goal orientations and support their level of motivation within the classroom.

Schools should also assess teachers' knowledge of achievement goals and whether they realize the influence they can have on students' personal achievement goals. It is expected that many educators are unaware of what achievement goals are and/or that they can help foster educationally adaptive goals within their classrooms. To account for this lack of knowledge, teachers should be educated on what achievement goals are, definitions on the different types of achievement goals, significant factors involved with achievement goals (i.e., gender differences, use of multiple goals, changes in students' achievement goals, etc.), and classroom goal orientations. This information can be given to educators through professional development activities such as in-service training, workshops, conferences, or through school staff meetings. This information would also be very useful to teach within pre-service education programs for university students who want to become teachers. By providing this information within pre-service programs, teachers would be entering the workforce with the knowledge on achievement goals and how they function within the educational environment to relate to students academic motivation and achievement within the school setting.

Second, there is the need to recognize the differences between boys in girls in their endorsement of achievement goals. While reasons for the gender differences can only be hypothesized, it is recommended that teachers understand that boys and girls may approach their schoolwork differently or hold differing attitudes towards school activities and assignments. It is also recommended that teachers keep in mind the differences between boys in girls in their perceptions of the classroom goals, as boys tend to view the classroom as more performance-approach or performance-avoidance oriented than girls. This suggests that boys may be focused on the ability and competence aspect surrounding

their personal schoolwork and what they perceive their teachers to be emphasizing. According to Sax (2007), boys are focused on competition while girls have a drive for relationships. With an understanding that boys and girls may approach schoolwork differently, should teachers modify instructional practices and schoolwork to match boys and girls learning needs? If there are true learning differences and approach to schoolwork between boys and girls, then teachers should attempt to integrate practices and academic tasks that are aligned to boys' and girls' approach to learning. This would not only help to support students' learning but help to foster motivation among all students.

Third, the information that was taken from students' response to the qualitative questions allow for additional recommendations that teachers can do within their classrooms to help motivate students complete their schoolwork. Students' responses indicated that a majority of them are concerned over their grades and future post high school, and in order to attain good grades and future they know they must complete their schoolwork. According to the expectancy-value theory, students are motivated by their incentive, or goal, to get good grades in order to be successful in their future (i.e., get into college or attain reputable job) (Atkinson, 1957). Students indicated that they struggle with completing their school assignments or activities when they are perceived as being difficult. This idea can be related back to the expectancy-value and the social cognitive theory by examining students' level of self-efficacy towards the academic task, and how students' sense of self-efficacy relates to their perception of task difficulty. Furthermore, students recommended that teachers could account for their feelings of task difficulty by slowing down when teaching the lesson or assignment and make sure that they are

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explaining it thoroughly. This would help to clear up any confusion or lack of understanding from the students' perspective, and possibly help to motivate them to want to complete their schoolwork. According to the achievement goal theory, this idea would align itself with the mastery goal orientation. Students also commented that teachers should try to make class assignments and activities more fun and interesting. This idea of employing schoolwork that is aligned with students' interests has been supported within the literature. Research has recommended that teachers incorporate instructional methods and assignments that spark students' interest and make schoolwork relevant to the students' lives (Gutherie, Wigfield, Humenick, Perencevich, Taboada, & Barbosa, 2006; Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994). Thus, the ideas that students recommended in their responses to the three qualitative questions can provide educators with a unique insight into students' feel their teachers can do to facilitate and/or support their motivation towards schoolwork.

Finally, while the results that have been discussed throughout this chapter have periodically referenced back to whether they are supported through the literature, it is important to discuss the study's findings in relation to the overall achievement goal theory. The original achievement goal theory defined achievement goals as mastery oriented or performance oriented; however later revisions of the theory extended the goal orientations to include mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance orientations (Elliot & Church, 1997). This study is aligned with the revised achievement goal theory in that it evaluated mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance achievement goals within the targeted middle school population as it found that students do employ mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance

goals to their schoolwork. The findings from the present study also provide support to the idea that there are two distinct types of performance goals: a performance-approach orientation and a performance-avoidance orientation.

The importance that classroom goal orientations can have on students' personal goals was also noted within the original theory. What is now known as classroom goal orientations were originally labeled classroom climate structures by Ames (1992). Within the original theory, it was suggested that the classroom environment provides common and individualistic experiences for students, and these experiences can lead the student to perceive the classroom climate from an individual or whole class perception (Ames, 1992). Furthermore, the perceptions that students make regarding their classroom environment can relate to their motivation, academic behaviors, and how they provide meaning to their classroom (Ames, 1992). Although there is considerable amount of information available on the relationship between students' achievement goals and classroom goal orientations, one area within the achievement goal theory that is limited is the knowledge of how multiple factors related to the individual function together to produce their overall achievement goal orientation. This lack of knowledge can be partially explained by referring back to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and his views of self-regulatory skills on students' level of self-efficacy. Research within the social cognitive theory suggested that there are multiple factors (i.e., environment, individual, and behavior) that interact together to produce students overall levels of self-regulation skills (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). This idea can be applied to the achievement goal theory in that the three core factors of environment, personal characteristics, and behavioral traits can also work together to form students' personal

achievement goals that they have towards their academic tasks. This idea could then be adapted to the relationship between students' personal achievement goals and perceptions of classroom goal orientations. With this idea, the environmental factor would be considered to be the school environment and the teachers' classroom goal orientations that functions together with students' individual and behavioral characteristics to produce students' overall achievement goal orientation(s).

Conclusion

The present study sought to expand upon the achievement goal theory by examining differences in achievement goals between students' grade level, gender, and how students' personal achievement goal orientations relate to their perceptions of classroom goal orientations. The first important finding from the study was that boys were more likely to hold performance-approach goals than girls, which parallels research findings and suggests that they may approach their schoolwork differently than girls. The second important finding from the study was the small relationship that was found between students' personal goals and their perceptions of the classroom goal orientations. A stronger relationship was anticipated suggesting that there may be other factors within students' lives (i.e. environmental, personal, and behavioral) that function together to produce students' overall achievement goal orientations. A final important finding from the study was that students appeared to hold more mastery goals over performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals, which diverges from the available literature on goal orientations and middle school students. The results from this study extend the literature on achievement goals, middle school students, and gender differences and illustrates the areas within the achievement goal theory still in need for advancement.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMATIONAL PARENT CONSENT LETTER

My name is Sara Byrne, and I am a graduate student from the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse. For one of my program requirements, I am completing a research study in order to learn more about the academic goals that middle school students hold. I am sending this letter to ask for your permission to allow your child to participate in my study by filling out a survey.

The purpose of this study is to gain information about the types of academic goals that students adopt in school, and to determine if there is a difference between students' grade level and/or gender in the type of goals that they pursue. The results could help parents and educators to better understand students' motivation and approach to school work, and will help to highlight any significant differences that are found to exist. This survey will not include any identifying information. The study will not ask for your child's name, or any other type of information that could be used to identify your child. Your child's participation will involve completing a survey that will be administered to entire homebase classes during a brief 10 – 15 minute period. The results of this study may be published in scientific literature, or presented at professional meetings using grouped data only, and will not include any identifying information of the individuals that complete the surveys.

Your child can withdraw from the study at any time, and for any reason without penalty. There are no rewards for participation, and there are no negative consequences for nonparticipation. Students and school professionals may benefit by gaining a greater understanding of the academic goals which motivate students to complete their school work.

Questions regarding the study procedures may be directed to the principal researcher, Ms. Sara Byrne (612-590-3478). Questions may also be directed to the study advisor, Dr. Robert Dixon, Department of School Psychology, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse (608-785-6893).

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*Please fill out this form and return it to the school front office before _____
2009 if you **DO NOT WANT** your child to participate.

_____ _____ _____
Student's Name   Grade   Homeroom Teacher

I have read the above, have been informed of the nature of this study, and **DO NOT WANT** my child to participate.

_____ _____
Parent/Guardian Signature   Date

APPENDIX B

QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

Survey Qualitative Questions

1) What makes you want to complete your schoolwork?

2) When is it hard for you to want to complete your schoolwork?

3) What could teachers do to help you want to complete your schoolwork?

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Survey Demographic Questions

Grade: _____

Age: _____

Gender: Male_____   Female_____

Ethnicity:

_____Caucasian (white)

_____Hispanic

_____African-American

_____Native American

_____Other: _____

APPENDIX D

STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE FIRST QUALITATIVE QUESTION

Table 9. A Complete List of Students' Responses to the First Qualitative Question

What makes you want to complete your schoolwork?		
Response	N	Percent
Grades (getting good grades or avoiding bad grades)	131	36.90%
For future college or job	79	22.25%
My parents	32	9.01%
To understand, learn, or be successful	27	7.61%
To pass	16	4.51%
To be able to do other things	12	3.38%
Nothing	7	1.97%
Sports	7	1.97%
Rewards	6	1.69%
Getting it done on time	2	0.56%
I don't know	2	0.56
So I don't get yelled at	2	0.56%
So I don't have to worry about it	2	0.56%
Knowing that I can do it	2	0.56%
So I don't get into trouble	2	0.56%
The teacher	2	0.56%
So I don't have to do it at home	1	0.28%
Because	1	0.28%
When I'm not doing good in class	1	0.28%
So I'm not the only one who didn't do it	1	0.28%
Motivation and help	1	0.28%
So I can use it to study for tests	1	0.28%
To play a game	1	0.28%
To do good on tests	1	0.28%
I'm forced to	1	0.28%
Seeing other people working and hearing they got a good grade	1	0.28%
Encouragement	1	0.28%
Getting an extra day or being rewarded	1	0.28%
Feeling a sense of accomplishment	1	0.28%
If it's a subject I like or projects	1	0.28%
Just do my work	1	0.28%
I think of the good things that come if I complete my schoolwork	1	0.28%
So I don't get behind	1	0.28%

Note. Responses are listed in descending order starting with the most frequent response.

APPENDIX E

STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE SECOND QUALITATIVE QUESTION

Table 10. A Complete List of Students' Responses to the Second Qualitative Question

When is it hard for you to want to complete your schoolwork?		
Response	N	Percent
When it is hard	65	18.21%
When I'm distracted	47	13.17%
When I want to do other things, or I am busy	39	10.92%
When I want to hang out with friends	28	7.84%
When I am tired	26	7.28%
When I have sports or other after school activities	20	5.60%
When I have a lot	18	5.04%
All the time	16	4.48%
It's never hard for me to complete my schoolwork	11	3.08%
When I'm bored or uninterested	8	2.24%
When I don't want to	7	1.96%
Personal emotional issues	7	1.96%
On nights or weekends	5	1.40%
When it is for a specific academic subject	5	1.40%
I don't know	4	1.12%
When I'm stressed	3	0.84%
When I have a new video game	3	0.84%
After school	3	0.84%
At the end of the quarter	2	0.56%
When there isn't much time left in class	2	0.56%
Nothing	2	0.56%
At home	2	0.56%
I just guess	2	0.56%
After you try to do your homework, correct it, and still get it wrong	1	0.28%
After I've missed school	1	0.28%
When the questions take a long time	1	0.28%
When I forget about my schoolwork	1	0.28%
When I didn't pay attention	1	0.28%
When I am against the topic or don't like the subject	1	0.28%
When the teacher doesn't' explain the assignment right	1	0.28%
When my grade is lower than a B	1	0.28%
When you have to attend afterschool programs	1	0.28%
When I don't ask questions	1	0.28%
When working in groups with smart group members, I want to depend on the others	1	0.28%
When I have other projects or assignments due the same day	1	0.28%
When there isn't a lot of homework	1	0.28%
When my brother bothers me in class	1	0.28%
When our lesson is cut short and never taught	1	0.28%
When they don't teach us the material	1	0.28%
When work is missing	1	0.28%

When there's no motivation	1	0.28%
My grades	1	0.28%
When I'm in class	1	0.28%
So I don't have homework	1	0.28%
Some of the time	1	0.28%
When I feel like I know how to do it easily	1	0.28%
When I'm entertained	1	0.28%
In a loud area	1	0.28%
When I'm hungry	1	0.28%
When I'm getting started	1	0.28%
If my parents make me finish before doing something else	1	0.28%
When it involves me thinking	1	0.28%
No music	1	0.28%

Note. Responses are listed in descending order starting with the most frequent response.

APPENDIX F

STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE THIRD QUALITATIVE QUESTION

Table 11. A Complete List of Students' Responses to the Third Qualitative Question

What could teachers do to help you want to complete your schoolwork?		
Response	N	Percent
Make schoolwork fun and interesting	54	15.21%
Explain the work more thoroughly	53	14.93%
Nothing	38	10.70%
Give less homework	34	9.58%
Give us more time in class	23	6.48%
Help us more	23	6.48%
Give more examples	18	5.07%
Give us rewards	16	4.51%
I don't know	14	3.94%
Not give us any, no homework	8	2.25%
Longer due dates, more time to complete assignments	7	1.97%
Keep the class quiet	6	1.69%
Encourage us or challenge us	5	1.41%
Give more points	4	1.13%
Help after school	3	0.85%
Make homework easier	2	0.56%
Be nice	2	0.56%
Teach better	2	0.56%
Better reviews for tests	2	0.56%
Talk to my parents	2	0.56%
Give less filler work	1	0.28%
Remind us what we are supposed to do	1	0.28%
Give you more homework	1	0.28%
Don't put too many activities into one class	1	0.28%
All of them	1	0.28%
Answer questions faster	1	0.28%
Help me practice the skills I learned	1	0.28%
Be more understanding that we have other after school activities	1	0.28%
Give different homework subjects each day instead of all together	1	0.28%
Stuff	1	0.28%
Add video games to homework	1	0.28%
Focus on the struggling kids more	1	0.28%
Make me pay attention	1	0.28%
We can come in early for help	1	0.28%
Work in groups	1	0.28%
Separate big projects into smaller projects	1	0.28%
Threaten us	1	0.28%
Tell us good things about college	1	0.28%
Have smaller class sizes so the teachers	1	0.28%

can actually help you		
Punish those who don't do their homework	1	0.28%
Use more visual learning	1	0.28%
Be quiet	1	0.28%
When I'm at home	1	0.28%
Stop bitchin	1	0.28%
Don't embarrass me when I want you to explain something	1	0.28%
Let us come into the classroom to do our work	1	0.28%
Give more schoolwork with technology	1	0.28%
Don't lecture the whole time	1	0.28%
Talk to you and give you advice	1	0.28%
Try to get everyone to participate	1	0.28%
I ask what I'm supposed to do	1	0.28%

Note. Responses are listed in descending order starting with the most frequent response.