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When are Achievement Goal Orientations Beneficial for Academic Achievement? A Closer Look at Main Effects and Moderating Factors

Quand les buts d'accomplissement sont-ils bénéfiques pour la réussite académique? Un regard aux effets principaux et aux facteurs modérateurs

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Abstract

To address the debate regarding the relation of mastery and performance-approach goal orientations to academic achievement, over 90 peer-reviewed journal articles were examined. In studies assessing self-reported achievement goal orientations, about 40% of the effects reported showed a positive relation between mastery goals and achievement and less than 5% showed a negative relation. Similarly, about 40% of the effects coded for performance-approach goals and achievement were positive while about 5% were negative. In experimental studies, approximately 20% of the effects favored mastery goal conditions, 10% favored performance-approach goals, with the remaining 70% showing no goal condition effect. Task characteristics (type of achievement task, task difficulty), psychological variables (perceived competence, multiple goals), and individual

Résumé

Pour aborder le débat à propos de la relation entre les buts de maîtrise et de performance-approche et la réussite académique, plus de 90 articles parus dans des revues à comité de lecture ont été examinés. Dans les études mesurant les orientations de but auto-rapportées, environ 40 % des effets rapportés indiquent une relation positive entre buts de maîtrise et réussite, et moins de 5 % indiquent une relation négative. De même, environ 40 % des liens observés entre buts de performance-approche et réussite sont positifs alors qu'environ 5 % sont négatifs. Dans les études expérimentales, environ 20 % des effets sont à l'avantage des conditions de buts de maîtrise, 10 % sont à l'avantage des buts de performance-approche, alors que les 70 % restant ne montrent aucun effet de la condition de buts. Les caractéristiques de la tâche (type de tâche académique, diffi-

Key-words

Achievement
motivation, academic
achievement

Mots-clés

Motivation à
l'accomplissement,
réussite académique

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differences (ability, age, gender, culture) were examined as potential moderators of these effects.

culté de la tâche), les variables psychologiques (compétence perçue, buts multiples), et les différences individuelles (capacités, âge, genre, culture) sont examinées comme modérateurs potentiels de ces effets.

In recent years, achievement goal theorists have disagreed about the potential benefits or detriments of performance-approach goal orientations for various learning related outcomes (Harackiewicz, Barron, Pintrich, Elliot, & Thrash, 2002; Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001). The current paper seeks to provide insight into these discrepant findings by (1) reviewing existing research linking achievement goal orientations to achievement (including standardized achievement tests, course grades and Grade Point Average (GPA), exam scores, and performance on academic tasks) for elementary through college aged populations, and (2) examining potential moderators for these findings. In particular, we consider whether the effects of achievement goals vary based on task characteristics, such as type of achievement task; psychological variables, such as perceived competence; and person characteristics, such as ability, gender, and age.

An achievement goal perspective represents a prominent approach to understanding achievement motivation in academic settings (Weiner, 1990). According to this approach, there are two main goal orientations that shape or frame an individuals' engagement in achievement settings. When individuals endorse a mastery goal orientation, the focus is developing their competence as well as learning and understanding (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). In contrast, an individual endorsing a performance goal orientation is focused on demonstrating competence, often in relation to others (Dweck & Leggett, 1988)¹. More recently, goal theorists have argued for distinction between approach or avoidance goals, such that one could either focus on attempting to look competent (performance-approach) or attempting to avoid the appearance of incompetence (performance-avoidance)

1. These goals have also been referred to as learning and performance goals (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), task and ability goals (Maehr & Midgley, 1991), and task-involved and ego-involved (Nicholls, 1984; 1990).

Achievement Goal Systems: An Application of Goal Systems Theory to Achievement Goal Research

*Les systèmes de buts d'accomplissement : une application de la théorie
des systèmes de buts à la recherche sur les buts d'accomplissement*

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Abstract

Achievement goal researchers have demonstrated that performance-approach goals predict grades but do not affect interest, whereas mastery-approach goals predict interest in academic subjects but do not usually predict grades (Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer, & Elliot, 2002). Goal systems theory (Kruglanski *et al.*, 2002) may help explain these effects. Performance goals may be strongly associated with a smaller range of academic behaviors than mastery goals, and these associations may explain why each goal creates its effects. The strong, narrow focus of performance goals may help students concentrate effort and reduce

Résumé

Les chercheurs dans le domaine des buts d'accomplissement ont démontré que les buts de performance-approche prédisent les notes mais n'affectent pas l'intérêt, alors que les buts de maîtrise-approche prédisent l'intérêt dans le domaine académique mais ne prédisent généralement pas les notes (Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer, & Elliot, 2002). La théorie des systèmes de buts (Kruglanski *et al.*, 2002) pourrait aider à expliquer ces effets. Il est possible que les buts de performance-approche soient fortement associés à un éventail plus étroit de comportements académiques que les buts de maîtrise, et que ces associations puissent expliquer pour-

Key-words

Achievement goals,
goal systems theory,
performance-approach
goals, mastery-
approach goals,
interest

Mots-clés

Buts
d'accomplissement,
théorie des systèmes
de buts, buts de
performance-
approche, buts de
maîtrise-approche,
intérêt.

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distractions. In contrast, the wide focus of mastery goals may make students prone to distractions, but also provide the opportunity to connect academics to other goals and interests. We present evidence from two studies showing that the academic behaviors that were judged to be important for pursuing achievement goals were more differentiated for performance than mastery goals. Furthermore, greater differentiation of academic behaviors partially mediated the relationship between performance goals and grades. In addition, mastery goals were strongly associated with a wider range of academic behaviors. These results demonstrate the utility of synthesizing achievement goal and goal systems theories.

quoi chaque but crée l'effet qu'il produit. La focalisation forte et ciblée des buts de performance pourrait aider les étudiants à concentrer leurs efforts et réduire les distractions. En revanche, la focalisation très large des buts de maîtrise pourrait rendre les étudiants sujets à distractions, mais devrait en même temps leur donner l'occasion de faire le lien entre le domaine académique et d'autres buts et centres d'intérêt. Nous présentons ici les résultats de deux études indiquant que les comportements académiques qui sont été jugés importants dans la poursuite des buts d'accomplissement sont plus différenciés pour les buts de performance que pour les buts de maîtrise. De plus, la plus forte différenciation des comportements académiques médiate partiellement la relation entre les buts de performance et les notes. Les buts de maîtrise sont fortement associés à une gamme plus large de comportements académiques. Ces résultats démontrent l'utilité de synthétiser la théorie des buts d'accomplissement et la théorie des systèmes de buts.

Achievement goal researchers have identified two broad categories of goals: performance goals, which focus on demonstrating competence and doing better than others at tasks, and mastery goals, which focus on developing competence, learning a task, and self-improvement (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1984). Achievement goals can also be split along an approach/avoid dimension (*e.g.*, Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Pintrich, 2000), but in this article, we focus on the approach versions of mastery and performance goals. Classroom and laboratory research have both demonstrated that performance goals have positive effects on

On Goals and Strategies: How a Fit between Performance Goals and Regulatory Strategies Affects Performance

À propos des buts et des stratégies: comment la correspondance entre les buts de performance et les stratégies de régulation affecte la performance

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Abstract

In the present research, we argue and demonstrate that a fit or non-fit between regulatory strategy and performance goal affects task performance. Specifically, we found that a prevention strategy results in better performance among performance avoidance (PAv) goal participants compared to performance approach (PAp) goal participants. However, in the promotion strategy condition and the no strategy control condition, no differences between both groups were observed. Practical implications and opportunities for future research are considered in the discussion.

Résumé

Dans la présente recherche, il est avancé et démontré que la correspondance entre la stratégie de régulation et le type de buts de performance affecte la performance à la tâche. Plus précisément, nous avons observé qu'une stratégie préventive entraîne une meilleure performance chez les participants à buts de performance-évitement (PAv) comparativement aux participants à buts de performance-approche (PAp). Cependant, dans la condition de stratégie de promotion et la condition contrôle sans stratégie, aucune différence n'est observée entre les deux groupes. Les implications pratiques ainsi que les opportunités pour de futures recherches sont discutées.

Key-words

Approach, avoidance, achievement goals, promotion, prevention, motivation, congruency

Mots-clés

Approche, évitement, buts d'accomplissement, promotion, prévention, motivation, congruence

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Prospective Relations between 2×2 Achievement Goals and the Quality of Sport Training

*Relations entre les buts d'accomplissement 2×2
et la qualité de l'entraînement sportif*

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Abstract

Athletes will ideally plan their training to ensure physical readiness for their next training bout and competition; however, different self-regulatory strategies may lead to different behaviors during training (e.g., using mental training strategies vs. using alcohol). Drawing on a contextual perspective, this study investigated whether athletes' 2×2 achievement goals predicted the quality of their training over the following six weeks. Female track and field athletes ($N = 71$) rated their 2×2 achievement goals at the beginning of their indoor season, completed bi-weekly behavior surveys, and maintained daily diaries for six weeks. Pre-season mastery-approach achievement goals predicted consistently beneficial training processes, whereas performance-based goals were unrelated

Résumé

Idéalement, les athlètes vont planifier leur entraînement de manière à être prêts physiquement pour leur prochain entraînement et pour la compétition. Cependant, différentes stratégies d'auto-régulation peuvent conduire à différents comportements pendant l'entraînement (e.g., utilisation de stratégies d'entraînement mental ou consommation d'alcool). Reposant sur une perspective contextuelle, cette étude a examiné si les buts d'accomplissements 2×2 des athlètes prédisaient la qualité de leur entraînement sur une durée de 6 semaines. Des athlètes de compétition féminine ($N = 71$) ont rapporté leur buts d'accomplissement 2×2 au début de la saison en salle, ont complété des enquêtes de comportements de manière bihebdomadaire, et ont tenu un journal

Key-words

Approach-avoidance,
self-handicapping

Mots-clés

Approche-évitement,
auto-handicap

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to training processes. Mastery-avoidance goals were positively associated with daily sport-related distress, whereas mastery-approach goals were negatively associated with daily sport-related distress. These findings suggest that defining competence in mastery-based terms is generally valuable for sport training provided that those goals are oriented toward the positive possibility of competence and not away from the aversive possibility of incompetence.

quotidien d'entraînement pendant six semaines. Les buts de maîtrise-approche en pré-saison prédisent de manière consistante des processus d'entraînements bénéfiques, alors que les buts de performance ne s'avèrent pas reliés aux processus d'entraînement. Les buts de maîtrise-évitement sont positivement associés avec la souffrance quotidienne liée à la pratique sportive alors que les buts de maîtrise-approche y sont négativement reliés. Ces résultats suggèrent que définir la compétence en termes de maîtrise est généralement souhaitable pour l'entraînement sportif à condition que ces buts soient orientés vers la possibilité positive de la compétence et non vers l'éloignement de la possibilité aversive de l'incompétence.

Achievement goals have emerged as one of the most popular constructs for explaining variability in human competence pursuits, processes, and outcomes (Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1984). Competitive athletes focus on achieving favorable training processes and competitive outcomes, and thus, may find the cognitive, behavioral, and affective consequences of different achievement goals to be especially relevant to their pursuits. Over the past decade, the achievement goal literature has expanded from an exclusive focus on the definition of competence in achievement goals (*i.e.*, mastery *vs.* performance) to incorporate the valence of those goals (*i.e.*, toward competence *vs.* away from incompetence) (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). This distinction between approach and avoidance goals has proven to be profitable in educational, industrial-organizational, and social psychological research (for reviews, see Moller & Elliot, 2006; Payne, Youngcourt, & Beaubien, 2007) but is less well-established in the sport domain (Elliot & Conroy, 2005; Roberts, Treasure, & Conroy, 2007). Accordingly, the present research examined links between the 2 (definitions of competence) \times 2 (goal valences) framework of achievement goals and a variety

Mastery Goals and Contingent Self-Worth: A Field Study

Les buts de maîtrise et la valeur de soi contingente : une étude de terrain

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Abstract

Academic failure lowers self-esteem among students whose self-esteem is contingent on academics; laboratory experiments show that learning orientations reduce this vulnerability. To test whether mastery goals reduce ego-involvement or simply alter the circumstances under which failure lowers self-esteem, we examined students' vulnerability to poor grades in the classroom. One week prior to receiving grades on a term paper, 142 college students completed measures of baseline trait self-esteem, mastery goals, and academic contingency of self-worth; after receiving their grade, they completed a measure of state self-esteem. Controlling for trait self-esteem, we found a Mastery Goal X Contingency X Grade interaction on

Résumé

L'échec académique réduit l'estime de soi des étudiants pour qui l'estime de soi est contingente aux activités académiques; les expériences de laboratoire montrent que les orientations vers l'apprentissage réduisent cette vulnérabilité. Afin de tester si les buts de maîtrise réduisent l'implication dans l'ego ou altèrent simplement les circonstances dans lesquelles l'échec diminue l'estime de soi, nous avons examiné la vulnérabilité des étudiants aux mauvaises notes au sein de la classe. Une semaine avant de recevoir leurs notes à un devoir trimestriel, 142 étudiants ont rempli une échelle permettant de mesurer leur niveau de base d'estime de soi-trait, leurs buts de maîtrise et la contingence académique de la valeur de soi; après avoir reçu leur note, ils

Key-words

Contingent self-worth, self-esteem, mastery goals, ability-validation goals, learning orientations

Mots-clés

Valeur de soi contingente, estime de soi, buts de maîtrise, buts de validation des capacités, orientation à l'apprentissage

Author Note

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posttest state self-esteem. Among highly contingent students, mastery goals predicted greater self-esteem vulnerability to grades and ability-validation goals fully mediated the Mastery Goal X Grade interaction. This study suggests that mastery goals do not always create resilient self-esteem among highly contingent students.

remplissaient une mesure d'estime de soi-état. Tout en contrôlant l'estime de soi-trait, nous avons observé une interaction Buts de maîtrise X Contingence X Note sur la mesure d'estime de soi-état. Parmi les étudiants fortement contingents, les buts de maîtrise prédisent une plus forte vulnérabilité de l'estime de soi aux notes, et les buts de validation des capacités médiatisent l'interaction Buts de maîtrise X Notes. Cette étude suggère que les buts de maîtrise n'entraînent pas toujours une estime de soi résistante chez les étudiants fortement contingents.

When people encounter difficulties accomplishing their goals, self-esteem often suffers (Covington, 1984, 1992; Crocker, Sommers, & Luhtanen, 2002; Crocker & Luhtanen, 2003). Because drops in self-esteem are emotionally painful, people often prioritize protecting self-esteem over learning and mastering the task (Baumeister, 1997; Covington, 1992). For example, students who receive lower-than-expected grades may protect self-esteem by disparaging the exam or instructor, deciding the course is not interesting or important, or even disengage from their major or disengage from school entirely (Crocker & Luhtanen, 2003; Schmader, Major, Eccleston, & McCoy, 2001; Schmader, Major, & Gramzow, 2001). Such defensive reactions to self-esteem threats have many costs. People who disengage or dismiss feedback to protect self-esteem miss opportunities to learn and broaden their understanding. Defensiveness in response to self-esteem threats may discourage others from providing feedback in the future, and undermine potentially supportive relationships. Ultimately, the failure to learn from difficulty or feedback may interfere with accomplishing important goals. Thus, identifying factors that increase or decrease vulnerability of self-esteem may promote learning and academic achievement. The present study examines vulnerability and resilience of self-esteem among college students who received a grade on a term paper.

Achievement Goals and Academic Cheating

Buts d'accomplissement et triche académique

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Abstract

In this paper, we examine the relations between goal orientation theory (*i.e.*, mastery and performance goals) and academic cheating. After reviewing basic demographic characteristics of students who engage in academic cheating, we examine the relations of achievement goals to cheating. Results generally indicate that mastery goals are related to lesser cheating, whereas performance goals are related to higher incidences of cheating. However, the complex relations between various levels of measurement of goals (*i.e.*, personal goals, classroom goal structures, and schoolwide goal structures) and different types of cheating illustrate that these relations are not always as predictable as one would hope. Implications for future research are discussed.

Résumé

Dans cet article, nous examinons les relations entre la théorie des buts (buts de maîtrise et de performance) et la triche académique. Après avoir passé en revue les caractéristiques démographiques classiques des étudiants qui pratiquent la triche académique, nous examinons les relations entre celle-ci et les buts d'accomplissement. Les résultats indiquent généralement que les buts de maîtrise sont liés à moins de triche, alors que les buts de performance sont liés à plus de triche. Cependant, les relations complexes entre les différents niveaux de mesure des buts (buts personnels, structures de buts en classe, structures de buts à l'échelle de l'école) et différents types de triche indiquent que ces relations ne sont pas toujours aussi prévisibles qu'on pourrait l'espérer. Les implications pour les recherches à venir sont discutées.

Key-words

Cheating, goal orientation, motivation

Mots-clés

Triche, orientation de buts, motivation

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Academic Achievement Goal Structures and Young Adolescents' Biased Preferences for Peers as Cooperation Partners: A Longitudinal Study

Structures de buts d'accomplissement académiques et préférences biaisées de jeunes adolescents pour les pairs comme partenaires de coopération: une étude longitudinale

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*Avi Assor**

Abstract

This study integrated understandings from Achievement Goal Theory and Social Identity Theory in order to investigate the relations between perceived teachers' emphasis on mastery and performance goals – achievement goal structures – and students' bias towards cooperating with peers who are similar to them. The study followed 100 students as they made the transition from elementary to Junior High School. Perceived mastery goals structure in Junior High was *negatively* related to biased preferences for cooperation partners, and perceived performance goals structure in Junior High was *positively* related to these biased preferences, over and beyond prior biased preferences for cooperation partners, achievement goal structure, personal achievement goals, and

Résumé

Cette étude intègre les éléments de compréhensions issus de la théorie des buts d'accomplissement et de la théorie de l'identité sociale de manière à examiner les relations entre la perception de la mise en avant des buts de maîtrise et de performance de la part des enseignants – les structures de buts d'accomplissement – et le biais des étudiants pour coopérer avec des pairs similaires à eux-mêmes. L'étude a suivi 100 étudiants au moment de la transition de l'école primaire au collège. La perception de la structure de buts comme orientée vers la maîtrise au collège est *négativement* reliée à la préférence biaisée pour les partenaires de coopération ; la perception de la structure de buts comme orientée vers la performance au collège est *positivement* reliée à ces préfé-

Key-words

Achievement goals,
social identity, early
adolescence,
cooperation

Mots-clés

Buts
d'accomplissement,
identité sociale,
préadolescence,
coopération

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academic efficacy assessed in elementary school. These relations were found also after controlling for students' preferences for cooperating with peers with similar level of academic ability, thus providing support to hypotheses concerning the social identity processes that are triggered by academic achievement goal structure.

rences biaisées, après contrôle des préférences biaisées, structures de buts, buts d'accomplissements personnels et efficacité académique initiaux, mesurés à l'école primaire. Ces relations sont observées après avoir contrôlé également les préférences des étudiants pour la coopération avec des pairs de même niveau académique, ce qui donne du crédit aux hypothèses concernant les processus d'identité sociale déclenchés par les structures de buts d'accomplissement académiques.

In the past couple of decades, achievement goal theory has become a dominant perspective in understanding achievement motivation, particularly in educational settings (Elliot, 1999; Meece, Anderman, & Anderman, 2006; Pintrich, 1994). The basic assumption of the theory is that people's motivation and behavior depend on the meaning that they construe for action in the achievement situation. Different meanings provide different purposes for action – achievement goal orientations – that are related to differences in the quality of engagement (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1992).

A large body of research in achievement goal theory examined how different purposes are related to the quality of engagement in academic tasks (Ames, 1992; Elliot, 1999; Meece *et al.*, 2006; Urdan, 1997). Most of the research examined the relations of different achievement goal orientations to cognitive, affective and behavioral outcomes such as use of learning strategies, self-regulation, grades, and well-being. Some research also examined the relations of motivational emphases on achievement goals in the educational environment on different purposes – achievement goal structures – with such processes. Yet, only little research dealt with the relations of achievement goal orientations with social aspects of engagement, such as students' social attitudes or behaviors towards others (for exceptions see Anderman & Anderman, 1999; Darnon, Muller, Schrager, Pannuzzo, & Butera, 2006; Kaplan, 2004; Ryan, Hicks, & Midgley, 1997). Moreover,

Forced Choice Versus Open-Ended Assessments of Goal Orientations: A Descriptive Study

Choix forcés versus mesures ouvertes des orientations de buts: une étude descriptive

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Abstract

The purpose of the present studies was twofold: (a) to describe the spectrum of goals adopted in physical education, and, (b) to relate forced-choice reports of goal orientations to open-ended, qualitative ones. Elementary ($n = 139$) and middle school ($n = 342$) physical education students participated in two studies. Results indicated that mastery approach goals included strong elements of social goals, (b) mastery avoidance goals were non-existent, questioning their presence in physical education, (c) performance approach goals involved strong elements of mastery approach goals and social goals, and, (d) performance avoidance goals involved high frequencies of mastery goals and affectivity goals. Also, the relationship between students' forced selection of goal orientations and their responses to open-ended questions was rather

Résumé

L'objectif des études présentées ici était double : (a) décrire le spectre des buts adoptés en éducation physique et (b) relier les mesures à choix forcé des orientations de buts à des mesures ouvertes qualitatives. Des élèves de classes élémentaires ($n = 139$) et moyennes ($n = 342$) d'éducation physique ont participé aux deux études. Les résultats indiquent que (a) les buts de maîtrise-approche contiennent de forts éléments de buts sociaux, (b) les buts de maîtrise-évitement sont non-existants, ce qui questionne leur présence en éducation physique, (c) les buts de performance-approche impliquent de forts éléments de buts de maîtrise-approche et de buts sociaux et (d) les buts de performance-évitement impliquent une forte fréquence de buts de maîtrise et de buts affectifs. La relation entre la sélection de buts en choix forcé et leurs réponses aux

Key-words

Goal orientations,
qualitative analysis,
assessment,
achievement goal
theory

Mots-clés

Orientation de buts,
analyse qualitative,
mesure, théorie
des buts
d'accomplissement

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low. It is concluded that multiple goals are most likely operative in achievement contexts and researchers may need to focus on their combination in order to understand students' achievement strivings.

questions ouvertes est plutôt faible. Il est conclu qu'il est probable que des buts multiples soient en jeu dans les contextes d'accomplissement et que les chercheurs devraient s'intéresser à leur combinaison de manière à comprendre ce que les étudiants recherchent en termes d'accomplissement.

Achievement goals have an eminent role in the educational psychology literature as they provide an explanatory framework for understanding the underlying cognitive, affective, self-regulatory and behaviorally related processes in achievement situations (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Renkema & Van Yperen, 2008; Tossman, Kaplan, & Assor, 2008). Achievement goals have been conceived as the overarching purposes for achievement strivings (Ames, 1992; Dweck 1986; Elliot, 1999) and they have been consistently related to a wide array of motivational, behavioral, affective and achievement outcomes (for a review see Elliot & Moller, 2003, also Anderman & Danner, 2008).

Validity of Goal Orientation Ratings

A recent concern in achievement goal theory, refers to the *construct validity* of achievement goals with an emphasis on their content (Brophy, 2005; see also Dowson & McInerney, 2003; Urdan & Mestas, 2006). For example Bodmann, Hulleman and Harackiewicz (2008) suggested that some of the negative effects of performance approach goals can be attributed to the "narrow" content of these goals. Because achievement goals might have different meanings in students' cognitions (Pintrich, 2003; Volet, 2001) and may yield different outcomes due to cultural factors (Elliot, Chirkov, Kim, & Sheldon, 2001; Wang, Biddle, & Elliot, 2007; Zusho, Pintrich, & Cortina, 2005), recent research has attempted to get an in depth understanding of *what lies behind* achievement goal orientations. Urdan and Mestas (2006) interviewed high school students who were previously identified as performance-avoidance oriented. Analyses of students' performance-goal related accounts revealed four main categories of

Achievement Goals and Social Judgment: The Performance-Approach Goals Paradox

*Buts d'accomplissement et jugement social:
le paradoxe des buts de performance-approche*

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Abstract

Although performance-approach goals are considered as “bad” goals by many researchers and teachers, succeeding at the university requires achieving more than one’s counterparts by pursuing performance-approach goals. The present research examines the perceived social value of performance-approach goals at the university. Students were asked to judge a target who strongly/weakly endorsed performance-approach goals from their own perspective and that of their teachers. The results indicated that targets who strongly endorsed performance-

Résumé

Bien que les buts de performance-approche soient considérés comme de «mauvais» buts par de nombreux chercheurs et enseignants, réussir à l’université nécessite de réussir mieux que les autres, en poursuivant des buts de performance-approche. La recherche présentée ici examine la valeur sociale perçue des buts de performance-approche à l’université. Des étudiants devaient juger une cible qui adoptait fortement ou faiblement des buts de performance-approche, de leur propre perspective et de celle de leurs enseignants. Les résultats indiquent que les cibles adoptant

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Performance goals,
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social utility, social
judgment

Mots-clés

Buts de performance,
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approach goals were perceived as lower in social desirability than those who weakly endorsed them, especially when participants answered from their own point of view. However, the former were perceived higher in terms of social utility than the latter, especially when participants answered according to their teachers' points of view. Results are discussed in term of explicit and implicit goals promotion at the university.

fortement des buts de performance-approche sont perçues comme plus faibles en termes de désirabilité sociale que celles les adoptant plus faiblement, surtout lorsque les participants répondent de leur propre point de vue. Cependant, les premières sont perçues plus positivement en termes d'utilité sociale que les secondes, surtout lorsque les participants répondent du point de vue de leurs enseignants. Les résultats sont discutés en termes de promotion explicite et implicite des buts à l'université.

Many teachers likely become frustrated when, despite their best efforts to focus students on course content and divert their attention from competitive issues, many students seem to be overly concerned with their grades – more exactly, their grades compared to those of other students. The focus on outperforming others is qualified by many researchers as “performance goals” (Dweck, 1986). During the last decade, these goals have been the center of an animated debate (see Harackiewicz, Barron, Pintrich, Elliot, & Thrash, 2002; Kaplan & Middleton, 2002; Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001). On the one hand, teachers may want to avoid performance goals as much as possible in their classes (e.g., Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986); however, a great deal of research suggest that these goals are significant predictors of positive outcomes, including academic achievement (for reviews, see Baron & Harackiewicz, 2000; Harackiewicz *et al.*, 2002; Linnenbrink-Garcia, Tyson, & Patall, 2008).

Researchers' debate about performance goals could reflect a more general ambivalence toward these goals in the educational system, especially at the university. In a recent paper, Darnon, Dompnier, Delmas, Pulfrey, and Butera (in press) examined and documented the ambivalence related to the perceived social value of achievement goals at the university. The aim of the present paper is to extend this research and unveil the dynamics of the performance-approach goals paradox.