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## Questions that Interest Us...

The overarching question that guides research in our lab is, **“What makes an optimal achiever?”** Achievement motivation plays a significant role in our educational, vocational, and avocational pursuits across the lifespan. Much is known about how to characterize individual differences in achievement motivation, but less is known about how these dispositions develop or their broader consequences.



In the **early childhood** period, we are interested in how parenting and temperament interact and influence developmental trajectories for achievement motivation. In **middle childhood and adolescence**, we are developing and testing interventions for youth sport coaches to promote mastery strivings that will optimize youth achievement motivation and associated outcomes, both in and out of sport.

We also investigate a variety of **processes and outcomes influenced by achievement motivation**. These consequences include, but are not limited to, affect regulation (e.g., shame, pride), cognitions and self-talk (e.g., self-criticism), dyadic interpersonal behavior, information processing, sportspersonship, task performance under different conditions, and rehabilitation outcomes.



## Some Recent Findings...

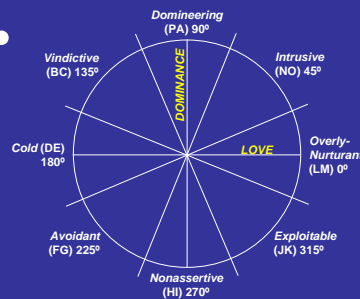
### Interpersonal Expressions of Achievement Motivation

Two studies were conducted to test links between self-attributed achievement motives and interpersonal problems (study 1: self-reported problems, study 2: peer-reported problems).

Being motivated to achieve by the anticipation of pride for being competent (nAch) buffers against having interpersonal problems. In contrast, individuals who anticipated feeling shame for being incompetent (fear of failure) experienced generalized interpersonal distress (i.e., elevations on all interpersonal problems). Neither achievement motive significantly biased how individuals perceived their peers' interpersonal problems.

In a third study, we paired strangers to work on a cooperative task. Under these “zero-acquaintance” conditions, the nAch was not associated with partner's ratings of participants' interpersonal impact; however, high FF individuals were perceived by their partners as being significantly more submissive and hostile-dominant (paralleling a classic shame-rage pattern).

These findings point to new pathways by which (a) achievement motivation may impact group productivity, and (b) achievement motives may be transmitted intergenerationally via interpersonal behavior.



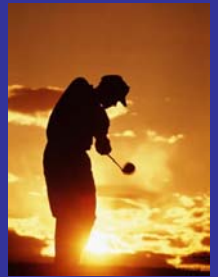
Inventory of Interpersonal Problems – Circumplex (Alden, Wiggins, & Pincus, 1990) illustrates a range of interpersonal problems that vary in the two principal dimensions of interpersonal behavior.

## Some Recent Findings...

### Achievement Motivation Influences Intraindividual Affective Variability

Competence pursuits can feel like an emotional roller-coaster but little is known about how or why affect varies for individuals during these pursuits. We conducted a study in which golfers rated their achievement motives prior to a round, their achievement goals prior to every hole, and three dimensions of affect (valence, arousal, dominance) before and after each hole in a round.

Although achievement goals covaried with pre-hole affect, they failed to predict how affect would change for each individual over the course of every hole. Fear of failure activated the defensive motivational system during competence pursuits and led golfers to feel significantly less pleasant, more aroused, and less dominant as they played each hole. These findings provide new insights into how motivation biases information processing and influences affective vicissitudes during competence pursuits.



### Organized Sports Can Promote Positive Youth Development

Little is known about whether, how, or why organized sports promote positive youth development. Our research indicates that the quality of coaching is a primary determinant of the developmental yield of youth sport. For example, perceived coaching behaviors and motivational climates predict the following outcomes in youth: (a) changes in self-talk, (b) changes in fear of failure, (c) changes in 2x2 achievement goals, (d) changes in behavioral regulations (motivation), (e) basic psychological need satisfaction, (f) changes in perceptions of competence, (g) changes in self-esteem, (h) identity reflection, and (i) initiative. One of our major goals at the moment is to evaluate the efficacy of coach training programs to enhance youth development through organized sports.

## Opportunities to Get Involved...

We have had great experiences working with undergraduate students in the lab and **we encourage you to consider this lab if questions about achievement motivation interest you, or if you are seeking basic experience in behavioral science**. Undergraduate students who worked in the lab previously have gained valuable research experience by helping with participant recruitment and enrollment, data collection, data management, manuscript preparation, and other duties in the lab. Undergraduate research assistants work closely with graduate and undergraduate research assistants, and Dr. Conroy. All research assistants are expected to attend and participate in weekly lab meetings. We welcome more involved participation by students who are highly responsible, curious about achievement motivation, and demonstrate initiative in their own work. Course credit (KINES 495/496) is typically awarded for student contributions to the lab, although wage payroll positions are occasionally available.