

Handbook of Competence and Motivation.

Elliot, A. J., & Dweck, C. S. (Eds.). New York: Guilford Press (www.guilford.com), 2005, 704 pp., \$76.00 (hardcover).

In this handbook Elliot and Dweck have integrated the disparate and somewhat isolated field of achievement motivation. They have done so by conceptualizing achievement as competence and by characterizing achievement motivation as competence motivation. Competence motivation is viewed as a basic psychological need that helps people adapt to and change their environment. This is a cognitively based conceptualization in that the “need for competence” is mediated, organized, and satisfied through cognitive processes. These cognitive processes include beliefs, expectations, and inferences about competence; schemas or goals oriented toward acquiring or demonstrating competence; and beliefs about the importance or value of different competence domains. The focus on these cognitive constructs is grounded on the assumption that individuals’ competence beliefs and competence schemas are vital forces in their choice to pursue or avoid competence relevant situations, to persist in the face of challenges and weather critical evaluation, and impact on affect and objective performance. The need for competence or the possibility for incompetence is seen to be relevant to the typical achievement domains in school, work, and sports but also in social, physical and psychological health domains. Competence motivation is seen to be relevant across the lifespan and across cultures. The editors have brought together a diverse group of scholars – those who have made contributions to the achievement motivation literature and those who have made contributions that are not typically included in the achievement motivation field - and asked them to reframe their areas of expertise using the construct of competence.

The volume is divided into five sections: (1) *Central Constructs* e.g., conceptions of ability as fixed and predetermined vs. varied abilities that are malleable and developing; competence goals to improve competence vs. prove competence or avoid demonstrating incompetence; subjective inferences of competence, (2) *Developmental Issues* e.g., competence assessment and motivation in early childhood, adolescence and old age, (3) *Contextual Influences* e.g., the role of parents, teachers, coaches, peers, schools, workplace and government policy, (4) *Demographic and Culture* e.g., gender, race socioeconomic status and cultural impact on competence assessment, motivation and fragility, and (5) *Self-regulatory Processes* e.g., defensive strategies, self-regulated learning and practice, and imaginal processes.

The editors have done an admirable job of providing a comprehensive overview of the literature while pulling it together within an integrated conceptual framework. Although it is difficult to map out all the varied constructs and experimental research onto this framework, it is an excellent attempt to absorb and cross-fertilize the varied areas of inquiry. The book is a good sourcebook for researchers, educators, clinicians, and advanced students. The numerous contributors review the experimental literature and in so doing leave the reader with many intriguing and potentially researchable questions. For researchers and practitioners in cognitive therapy especially, there are numerous opportunities to shift perspective and think about their areas of interest in different ways. For example during the last two decades educational, developmental, sports and social-personality psychologists have been extending and experimentally testing the achievement goal approach (see chapters by Elliot, Duda). In general the experimental results across these setting are in keeping with theoretical predictions of this goal model. In the simplest form, the achievement goal approach posits two goals: to develop

competence (mastery goal) vs. to demonstrate competence or avoid demonstrating incompetence to self or others (performance goal). Experimental and correlational studies have shown that each of these goals are related to distinct constellations of beliefs (the meaning of success, effort, mistakes, ability), emotions (shame, guilt, pride) and behaviors (task choice, persistence in the face of difficulty). For instance researchers have shown that individuals who hold mastery rather than performance goals are more resilient in the face of failure feedback, increasing effort and changing strategies while maintaining positive affect. It would seem that this goal approach would have implications for research and interventions in cognitive therapy. Would helping patients to shift goals in challenging situations have an impact on their emotional and behavioral resilience?

Another potential area of interest for cognitive therapy research and practice is embodied in the chapter on self-regulated learning (Zimmerman & Kitsantas). Although the research reviewed focuses on academic and athletic self-regulation, the described self-regulatory skills and accompanying self-motivational beliefs would be very relevant to fostering change in psychotherapy. Similarly, the chapter on goal engagement - disengagement (Carver & Scheier) is applicable to problems patients present. The authors present a model of potential responses to the perception that a goal is unattainable. Such as, does the individual give up effort yet remain committed to the goal (helplessness), or give up the goal but choose no new goal (emptiness). In their model they elucidate the more adaptive responses to goal disengagement.

There are also insights that may be derived from research on teacher- student relationship and competence (Urdan & Turner) that are relevant to therapist-patient relationship. The chapter summarizes recommended teacher practices for enhancing competence motivation in their students. There are many pragmatic implications for clinical practice in that the aims of educators often overlap with those of cognitive therapists. That is, how do you promote perceptions of control and autonomy, how do you provide competence feedback that is informational and not just evaluative, how do you encourage individuals to attribute competence, learning and performance to controllable factors like strategy use and effort? Furthermore, these researchers are examining teachers' beliefs about the malleability vs. fixedness of ability and its impact on student performance. Would a therapist's beliefs about the malleability vs. fixedness of certain diagnoses impact treatment?

In summary, this comprehensive book is thought-provoking. The editors have gathered a diverse group of experts who illuminate processes and constructs that are germane to cognitive therapy researchers and practitioners.

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