

**Describing the Achievement Goals of Participants in a Career Development Event  
Workshop**

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### Introduction/Need for Research

The National FFA Organization boasts that a total of 235 unique careers in agriculture exist, and Career Development Events (CDE) provide participants with the authentic experiences to prepare students for these careers (National FFA Organization, 2016a). In a nation-wide study, Talbert and Balshweid (2006) reported that over 60% of members had participated in a CDE. Literature concerning students' motivation to participate in a CDE has primarily involved students during or after the point they had participated in a state or national level CDE, and the results are mixed (Croom et al., 2009; Curry et al., 2016; Knobloch et al., 2016). Knobloch et al. (2016) stated, "It is likely that the purpose and potential benefits of CDEs are clearly understood by students when they make a decision to participate" (p. 24). The purpose of this study was to describe the types of achievement goals of Oklahoma FFA members to initially participate in a CDE. This study occurred prior to the contest season when students were being introduced to CDEs. Results from this study could bring added information to school-based agricultural education (SBAE) teachers pertaining to the initial motivation for students to choose to participate in a CDE. Four research objectives guided this study: 1. Describe the population of secondary students participating in the Oklahoma State University (OSU) CDE workshop. 2. Identify if students are interested in a future career related to their CDE. 3. Identify the achievement goals for students participating in a CDE workshop. 4. Compare achievement goals for male and female CDE workshop participants. Research from this study aligns with the AAAE National Research Agenda 2016-2020 Priority 5: Efficient and effective agricultural education programs (Roberts, Harder, & Brashears, 2016).

### Theoretical Framework

Elliot, Murayama, and Pekrun (2011) expanded the achievement goal construct into a 3 x 2 model that includes six goals that framed this study. Achievement goals are described as "a purpose for engaging in behavior in an achievement situation" (Elliot, 2005). Elliot proposed dividing the performance goal construct into approach and avoidance motivational components (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). As a way of evaluating the constructs, Elliot stated, "[I]n general, approach-based goal pursuit is much more pleasant phenomenologically and is better suited to facilitate efficient and effective task engagement" (Elliot et al., 2011, p. 634). The 3 x 2 achievement goal model's ability to explain and categorize achievement behavior can be applicable to the competitions that are a major part of school based agricultural education.

### Methodology

FFA members from Oklahoma participating in the OSU CDE workshop were the target population for the study. The one-day workshop was open to all students in Oklahoma and was advertised through the Oklahoma FFA webpage and SBAE teacher listserv. Along with demographic items, participants were presented with 18 statement items adapted from the 3 x 2 Achievement Goal Questionnaire (Elliot, et al., 2011) that represented types of goals they may or may not have to participate in a CDE workshop. Elliot et al. (2011) established *a priori* Cronbach's alpha scores for task-approach ( $\alpha = .88$ ), task-avoidance ( $\alpha = .86$ ), self-approach ( $\alpha = .83$ ), self-avoidance ( $\alpha = .87$ ), other-approach ( $\alpha = .92$ ), and other-avoidance ( $\alpha = .91$ ). The Cronbach's alpha reliability estimates for this study included task-approach ( $\alpha = .82$ ), task-avoidance ( $\alpha = .89$ ), self-approach ( $\alpha = .86$ ), self-avoidance ( $\alpha = .82$ ), other-approach ( $\alpha = .93$ ), and other-avoidance ( $\alpha = .93$ ). The reliability scores for each achievement goal construct were acceptable (Field, 2013), with Cronbach's alpha scores above .80. Face and content validity were assessed through a panel of experts. The student participants were selected through convenience

sampling; therefore, the results are not generalizable beyond the participants in the study (Privitera, 2017).

### Results/Findings

The majority of the 73 participants were female (58.9%), compared to males (41.1%). Ninth grade students were the most represented in this study at 37%. Most of the participants were in grades 8 through 10 (66%), and the remaining 34% were in grades 11 and 12. Most participants (64%) reported that they had participated in 0 or 1 CDE before, and 95% reported participating in 4 or less CDEs. Results from the study showed 46% of participants indicated they were not interested in a career related to their CDE. Task avoidance was the highest goal orientation for students that were interested in a career related to their CDE ( $M = 5.36$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ), and for those that were not ( $M = 5.41$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ). Table 1 shows the mean values of the six achievement goal constructs.

Table 1.

*Descriptive Statistics for achievement goal instrument (N = 73)*

	Total (N = 73)		Male Students (n = 30)		Female Students (n = 43)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Task-avoidance	5.31	1.56	5.32	1.44	5.30	1.65
Self-avoidance	5.17	1.57	5.01	1.69	5.27	1.50
Task-approach	5.15	1.45	5.12	1.48	5.17	1.44
Other-avoidance	4.96	1.70	4.99	1.74	4.94	1.69
Other-approach	4.93	1.81	5.20	1.54	4.74	1.97
Self-approach	4.50	1.75	4.77	1.90	4.81	1.67

*Note. Scale = 1-7; 1 = Not true of me, 7 = Extremely true of me*

### Conclusions

Younger, inexperienced CDE competitors from this study appear more concerned with avoiding failure than approaching success. Elliot et al. (2011) noted that avoidance-based goals tend to distract from full commitment to the task, and can cause concerns in regards to confidence. The lack of experience reported by the participants could account for the students' focus on avoiding incompetence rather than focusing on success. Students were least concerned with self-approach goal, or "doing better than before" (Elliot et al., 2011). Most students being novice or having no previous experience with CDEs could explain that result. Almost half (46%) of participants reported that they were not interested in a career related to their chosen CDE in the workshop, which supported the findings from Croom et al. (2009). Although both male and female students reported task-avoidance as their highest goal, male students are more motivated by the other-approach goal than female students, which would indicate that males are more motivated by "doing better than others," (Elliot et al., 2011, p. 634) than female students.

### Implications/Recommendations/Impact on Profession

Oklahoma SBAE teachers should investigate strategies that shift students' goal orientation from avoidance-based to approach-based, when necessary. SBAE teachers should consider placing students in CDEs that relate to their career interests in order to align with FFA's goal of college and career readiness. The results of this study add to the literature pertaining to student motivation towards CDEs, but more research is necessary to address the mixed-results within CDE motivation research in order to better describe the reasons different populations of students initially choose to participate in CDEs.

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