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The Classification and Coding of Striving: Success and Failure

- [Introduction](#)
- [Success](#)
- [Failure](#)
- [Coding Procedures for Success and Failure](#)
- [Coding for Consequences of Success and Failure](#)
  - [Consequences of Success](#)
  - [Consequences of Failure](#)

Introduction

In dealing with the interactions and activities engaged in by characters, coding attention has been paid, so far, only to whether reciprocal acts follow some initial act. Left out has been an important consideration -- does a character succeed or fail in carrying these activities through to some desired outcome? In order to take these *results* into account, we have developed a classification for striving. Included within this classification are the two classes of Success and Failure. In our efforts to fashion a workable striving scale, our greatest difficulty was encountered in attempting to decide how much latitude should be allowed for the criteria governing success and failure. We eventually settled on a rather stringent and rigorous standard. First, it must be reasonably clear from the dream report that a character has formulated some definite task to accomplish or goal to achieve and sets out in a deliberate attempt to realize this ambition. If he or she is then successful in pursuing the objective to a satisfactory conclusion, a success is coded; if he or she is unsuccessful, a failure is coded. Coding examples are provided below.

Success

In order for a success to be coded, the character must be described as expending some energy and perseverance in pursuit of his goal. The objective need not be of epic significance; a successful handling of some difficulty encountered in a character's daily life is sufficient to qualify. What is important is that the character is confronted by some problem, decides to deal with it, and then works at its solution before eventually managing to succeed. Any type of magical solution would be coded as a good fortune, which will be discussed in the next section.

> "I discovered I had a flat tire so I got my tools and began to change it. It turned out to be a rather difficult job, but I KEPT AT IT AND FINALLY MANAGED TO FIX IT."
> "A man was chasing me with a gun. By running down some narrow dark alleys and climbing some high fences, I FINALLY WAS ABLE TO GET AWAY."

> "The exam was a tough one but I was determined to get a good grade. I wrote as fast as I could and put down all the examples I had memorized. I FELT SURE THAT I HAD DONE WELL ON IT."

> "I had asked this beautiful blond for a date earlier but she said no. I sent her flowers, a box of candy, and a singing telegram. When I called again SHE SAID THAT SHE WOULD GO OUT WITH ME NEXT SATURDAY."

Failure

The same prerequisites described for success -- willingness to deal with an existing problem and continuing efforts to master it -- must also be met before failure can be coded. The difference is only in

the matter of outcome. When a character is not able to achieve his or her desired goal because of personal limitations and inadequacies, a failure is coded. If a character is thwarted in the achievement efforts because of some adverse environmental intervention such as a storm or sudden illness, a misfortune is coded.

> "I wanted to board this boat and kept trying to climb the ladder but every time I got near the top I SLIPPED BACK INTO THE OCEAN AGAIN."
>
> "When I saw all the parts to the TV lying on the table top, I decided to repair the set. I kept trying to put the parts together but I NEVER WAS ABLE TO ASSEMBLE THEM CORRECTLY."
>
> "My father COULDN'T FIND HIS GLASSES although he looked high and low for them all over the house."
>
> "My sister kept trying to sell a raffle ticket to my uncle. She asked, pleaded, and begged him but no matter what she tried, she still WASN'T ABLE TO SELL HIM ONE."

Coding Procedures for Success and Failure

The coding symbol for the type of achievement is listed first, followed by a comma. The coding symbol for success is **SU**, for failure it is **FL**. After the comma, the coding symbols for the relevant characters are recorded. Multiple characters are joined by a plus sign.

"I wanted to hit a home run. After two consecutive strikes, I decided that it would be the next one that I would belt out of the park. I swung real hard and heard the ump yell, 'STRIKE THREE, YOU'RE OUT.'"	**FL**, D
"Betty, my roommate, and I came up with the idea to redecorate our room. We painted, wallpapered, and moved everything around. When IT WAS FINALLY COMPLETED, we were very pleased with the results, and everyone who saw it complimented us on how well done it was."	**SU**, D+1FKA
"My brother, teenage sister, and cousin announced that they were going to climb this nearby mountain. They all came back later and said that it had been hard going but THEY HAD FINALLY MADE IT TO THE TOP."	**SU**, 1MBA+1FTT+1IRA

Coding for Consequences of Success and Failure

Sometimes after achieving a success or failure, something else will occur which will change the outcome for a character. Fate, or some other character, may step in to alter what a character has just achieved. The character himself may push his efforts harder which again may result in a reversal of the previous outcome. To handle such situations, three subclasses of consequences which may modify the original outcome are coded for each of the achievement outcomes. These consequences are represented by placing the coding symbols for them in parentheses after the coding that appears for the achievement outcome unit. Since these consequences are classifications that appear in other sections, these codes also appear separately and independently of their consequence status. The rationale for coding such consequences is that of preserving the sequence of dream events in order to answer certain dynamic questions which might be raised. Such questions might take the form of "How often does a character succeed only to have his efforts nullified by the environment?" or "In what percentage of failures does some other character intervene and attempt to help the failing character?"

It should be noted that many researchers using the Hall/Van de Castle scoring system do not bother to record consequences of success and failure, since they occur so rarely; also, they can make a bit of a mess of your scoring sheets!

Consequences of Success

1. A character achieves success but it is nullified by a misfortune. The coding symbol for misfortunes is **M**; they are discussed in the [next page](#), which covers environmental misfortunes and good fortunes.

> "I had worked very hard to make the cheerleading squad. After finally receiving word that I had made it, I BROKE MY LEG AND COULDN'T BE A CHEERLEADER."

SU, D (**M**)
M5, D

2. A character achieves success but subsequently overextends himself and failure occurs.

> "I was making a great deal of money by skillful maneuvering on the stock market. Then I began to speculate and LOST ALL MY MONEY."

SU, D (**FL**)
FL, D

3. Another character intervenes in an aggressive fashion and intentionally nullifies the success.

> "My brother and I had been struggling to build this fancy model house out of wooden match sticks. After we finally glued the last one in place, my 11-year-old brother came along and INTENTIONALLY DROPPED A BRICK ON IT WHICH DEMOLISHED IT."

SU, D+1MBA (**A**)
1MBC **A5>** D+1MBA

Consequences of Failure

1. A failure is reversed by a good fortune. The coding symbol for good fortune is GF. This class of events is discussed in the [following page](#) on environmental press.

> "I was really sweating over a chemistry problem and couldn't come up with the answer when, as if by magic, THE ANSWER APPEARED WRITTEN DOWN ON THE PAPER. I could hardly believe what I saw."

FL, D (**GF**)
GF, D

2. A failure is overcome when the character through unusual effort or new approach manages to succeed.

> "My father kept trying to get a job but was always getting turned down. In desperation, he ran a newspaper ad and MANAGED TO GET ONE AT LAST."

FL, 1MFA (**SU**)
SU, 1MFA

3. A failure is overcome through the friendly intervention of another character.

> "My teenage brother had his car apart and couldn't get it together. I GAVE HIM A DIAGRAM OF THE ENGINE and then he was able to complete the job."

FL, 1MBT (**F**)
D **F4>** 1MBT

[(Return to top)](#)

[Go back](#) to the coding rules index.

[Move on](#) to the coding rules for misfortune and good fortune.

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