UC Merced
Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

Achievement Goals and Learning in a Lecture Course: Moving Towards Mastery Goals Predicts Deeper Learning

Permalink

Journal

ISSN

Authors

Belenky, Daniel
Nokes, Timothy
Bernacki, Matthew

Publication Date

2011

Peer reviewed

Achievement Goals and Learning in a Lecture Course: Moving Towards Mastery Goals Predicts Deeper Learning

Daniel Belenky
University of Pittsburgh

Timothy Nokes
University of Pittsburgh

Matthew Bernacki
University of Pittsburgh

Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between achievement goals and the type of knowledge acquired during a University lecture course in Cognitive Psychology. Students' achievement goals (mastery-approach, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance) were measured right before each of the 3 exams administered during the course. Each exam included items that assessed factual, conceptual, and application-based knowledge. Exam 1 performance on factual and conceptual items was (marginally) positively predicted by performance-approach goals but not mastery-approach goals. However, by Exam 3 mastery-approach goals positively predicted performance whereas performance-approach goals did not. Furthermore, changes in these goals from Exam 1 to Exam 3 predicted performance. Becoming more mastery-oriented over time predicted higher Exam 3 scores, while becoming more performance-approach-oriented predicted lower scores. This difference was particularly strong for application questions, which required a deeper understanding of the material. Results are discussed in terms of a theory describing the effect of goals on learning processes and performance.