

Symposium

MULTIPLE GOALS AND SELF REGULATION

Organiser: Monique Boekaerts, Leiden University, The Netherlands
Chair: Monique Boekaerts, Leiden University, The Netherlands
Discussant: Simone Volet, Murdoch University, Western Australia

A variety of goal frameworks are available in the personality and social psychology literature. These models reflect some differences but also many similarities in focus. In most models a distinction is made between goals that individuals pursue because they have attached value to them and goals that individuals pursue because somebody else has deemed them important. A great deal of student behavior that we see in the context of the classroom reflects the students' willingness to comply with the goals of somebody else (imposed goals). In order to understand why students pursue some goals and neglect other goals, but also why they show persistence in one situation and avoidance in another situation, it is essential that one has insight into the students' goal structure and into the self-regulatory processes that they perform to make their goal structure consistent and coherent. Despite the high potential of the goal construct for explaining motivated engagement in every day learning contexts, students' pursuit of multiple goals has received scant attention. A handful of researchers have tried to put multiple goals on the research agenda in educational psychology. They have argued that the content of students' goals is highly informative to explain and predict their behavior in a given situation, mainly because it reflects their unique needs, temperaments, and social experiences. Accumulating evidence reveals that students' ability (1) to keep their goal structure coherent and (2) to navigate their goals in the intended direction may well explain why some students are successful at school and enjoy the learning environments that are created there, and others do not. In the symposium, three different approaches to the study of multiple goals will be presented. After these presentations, a discussant will comment on the three different approaches and invite the audience to participate in the discussion.

The goal priorities of first year university students, and their relation to successful adaptation
Marina Serra de Lemos, University of Porto, Portugal

Within a larger research project on students' successful adaptation to university, in this paper we focused on students' personal goals for attending university courses. Both the literature on developmental tasks, and the acknowledgement of the multidimensional nature of the university context suggest that, besides academic achievement, young adult students will also pursue social and relational goals. Based on the view that goals are individual purposes, steering and directing motivated activity, evaluating students' goal priorities is specially relevant to the understanding of their interests, engagements, performance, and outcomes. More specifically, in the study that will be discussed we analyze the relationships between, on the one hand, the salience of various goals and, on the other, students' academic, social, and biopsychological adaptation to the university. The study had 3 main aims: (a) to empirically examine the relative importance attached by university students (494, 1st year university students) to academic, social, and relational goals, (b) to analyze differences in goal priorities of different groups of students (defined by gender, age, and enrollment in different academic programs, and (c) to analyze the relationships between students' goal priorities, their satisfaction in the different goal-relevant domains, and indicators of adaptation such as academic interest, achievement, and well-being.