

**INVOLVED AND FOCUSED?  
STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL  
IDENTITY, PERSONAL GOAL ORIENTATION  
AND LEVELS OF CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT**

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The present study explores the relationship between students' perception of their institution's mission identity, personal goal orientation tendencies, and the extent to which they engage in mission-driven activities. Goal orientation research categorizes student motivations in three ways: mastery orientation (MO), performance-approach (PAp) orientation, and performance-avoidance (PAv) orientation. Mastery students focus on learning course content, while performance students are concerned with results. PAp students seek favorable results, and PAv students are concerned with avoiding negative results. Participants (n = 1,686) from a private midwestern, Roman Catholic university completed a multi-measure, self-report survey through on-line format. Results indicated that three goal orientation types were stronger in highly engaged students, with goal mastery orientation most significantly increasing with levels of engagement, compared to two types of performance orientations. Alternative settings in which goal orientation may influence behavior are discussed.

Student motivation has been an interest of educational psychologists for decades (see Ames & Archer, 1988; Dweck, 1984; Elliot & Church, 1997; Nicholls, 1984). Research in the late 1980s and early 1990s identified different types of goals that students often pursue within educational settings (Dweck, 1986). One prominent goal-focused model developed by Ames and Archer (1988) is called *Goal Orientation Theory* (GOT). In this model, goal orientation divides into *mastery oriented goals* (MOG), focused on mastery of material, and *performance oriented goals* (POG), directed towards reaching favorable results in varied situations. Furthermore, performance goals may be subdivided into *performance-avoidance*

(PAv) goals, motivated by thoughts of avoiding failure or negative results (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hole, 1988), or *performance-approach* (PAp) goals, the pursuit or approaching of goals for desired positive outcomes (Elliot, 1999). *Mastery oriented* (MO) students are concerned with learning course material, driven by intellectual curiosity, and most interested with mastering their coursework. Behaviors commonly attributed to MO students include a drive towards novel and challenging tasks, attribution of success to effort, high levels of task enjoyment, high degree of meta-cognition, resilience to failure, and exploration of alternate learning strategies. Mastery goal orientation is often linked to long-term learning, skill devel-

opment, and greater persistence in the face of challenge. (Ames & Archer, 1988; Dweck & Leggett, 1988), while performance oriented students engage in self-aggrandizing attributions, task aversion, utilization of minimal strategies, unwillingness to ask for assistance, self-handicapping behaviors, and attribution of failure to personal abilities (Meece et al., 1988).

*Performance oriented* (PO) students want most to outperform their peers, and they are concerned with tangible results like grades (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). PO students, in contrast to MO students, are more prone to adopt maladaptive behaviors following an unfavorable result (Ames, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1988; Graham & Golan, 1991). PO students experience decreased classroom performance following a poor test outcome (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Hoyert & O'Dell, 2006). Performance-avoidance goals are associated with high anxiety, low performance, unwillingness to seek help, self-handicapping behaviors, and low efficacy (Urduan, Ryan, Anderman, & Gheen, 2002).

Interest in the application of goal orientation models and strategies extends beyond merely academic settings. For instance, mastery style learning approaches (but not performance orientation strategies) applied to the workplace are positively associated with upward mobility and in-house promotions (Lin & Chang, 2005). In fact, goal orientation models have been used to improve industrial training programs, because these strategies recognize that participant level of motivation affects skill acquisition (see Smith, 2005).

Goal orientation strategies also appear as an operating agent in extracurricular activities, including sports and music (Ryska, Zenong, & Boyd, 1999; Smith, 2005).

The present study explores the role of goal orientation styles or strategies with undergraduates engaged in campus extracurricular activities (non-sports) that reflect the mission, vision, and values of their university. Goal orientation styles may impact a person depending on how much he or she is engaged in a given setting, and that engagement may have long-term implications for student development with respect to embracing the institution's higher educational mission. Because MO individuals tend to adopt and ingrain skills for many years (Roebken, 2007), it is possible that these persons may demonstrate more favorable perceptions of their institution's mission through increased levels of engagement. Higher education officials need to consider campus environments that may play a large role in fostering goal orientations that help students adapt to various settings. Therefore, it is important for these officials to monitor the goal orientation styles of students, while striving to maintain a climate that fosters mastery oriented behavior (Anderman & Anderman, 1999). This outcome will improve the level of individual investment, and the long-term value of programs.

Universities utilize mission statements as a way to maintain focused attention on the priorities and the goals of their institution. The success of a mission statement is largely dependent upon the vigor with which it is implemented (Pohl, 2002; Velcoff & Ferrari, 2006). The levels at which

organizations actualize their mission statement (i.e., how well they implement mission-driven activities on campus and in the community) may be a factor leading to greater commitment, engagement, and activity among students (Pohl, 2002; Ehrlich, 2000; Ferrari, Cowman, Milner, & Guitierrez, 2008). Mission-related programs potentially expose students to civic values and community service that might be lacking in a typical university classroom (Ehrlich, 2000). Moreover, Christian (e.g., Roman Catholic) higher education institutions who express their mission overtly to students significantly increase adoption of the mission by the student body across the four years of their education (Foster & LaForce, 1999; Ferrari, Kapoor, & Cowman, 2005). Faith-based higher education institutions transmit values, enabling students to achieve ethical and moral development reflective of the institution's mission statement (Ferrari et al., 2008). By being engaged in campus extracurricular activities it is possible that students may become more aware of the mission of their institution (Ferrari et al., 2005), and these levels of engagement might reflect differences in personal goal orientations.

We examined the goal orientation of students who participate in university mission related activities at a faith-based institution. We surveyed students using the recently created *DePaul Mission and Values Scale* (DMV; Ferrari & Velcoff, 2006), to assess the level of mission-related engagement among university students. In addition, participants completed a measure assessing goal orientations, focusing on mastery, performance approach, and

performance avoidance orientation styles. In the present study, the prevalence of different GO styles among students of differing levels of engagement was evaluated. We predicted that high levels of mastery orientated students would report significantly higher engagement to mission related activities than students with other orientation styles. We also predicted high performance-approach levels among highly engaged individuals. It was anticipated that performance-avoidance levels would not be associated with mission activity engagement. We also expected high levels of activity engagement to be associated with strong perceptions of the institution's mission and values, as assessed by the *DMV* scales.

## Method

### *Participants and Setting*

Participants were undergraduates from DePaul University (1,070 women, 616 men). DePaul University is a medium-sized, faith-based, urban university in the Midwest serving more than 23,000 students in the greater Chicago area. The university's benchmark characteristic is an "*urban, Catholic, and Vincentian*" institution and expresses its vision through the values inherent to these concepts. Its purpose is to serve the residents of Chicago (urban characteristic), who tend to be first-generation college students, with varied faith-based practices including Roman Catholic (Catholic pluralism characteristic), and, based on its patron saint, to include diverse viewpoints and respect for the individual (after St. Vincent DePaul).

Most participants (61.9%) were Cau-

casian, and Roman Catholics made up the largest religious affiliation (39.2%). In addition, nearly half the participants reported being lower division students (48.9% first year or sophomore). Within lower division status, students were spread fairly evenly across academic class, with 404 freshman (23.6%) and 433 sophomores (25.3%). The mean grade point average (GPA) for participants was 3.25 on a 4.0 scale ( $SD = .55$ ).

#### *Psychometric Scales*

All participants completed Ferrari and Velcoff's (2006) *DePaul Mission and Values* (DMV) Scale, a 39-item, self-report survey divided into two sections believed to be reflective of mission statements among contemporary urban, faith-based (Catholic) higher education institutions. One section of items contained questions each rated along 7-point scales (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) that tapped into the university's benchmark institutional identity. Ten of these items inquired whether respondents perceived the university as inclusive and innovative, reflecting the belief that the institution is innovative in operational procedures, inclusive of persons from all backgrounds, takes risks in an entrepreneurial way, is pragmatic in educational focus, remains relevant in a changing society, keeps its urban identity, and fosters mutual understanding and respect for others (current sample scores:  $M$  sum score = 54.69;  $SD = 10.55$ ;  $\alpha = .917$ ). The other 6 items reflected the Catholic pluralism aspects of the mission relating to the university's goal of inviting all faiths to examine Catholicism and other faiths, providing curricula

on Catholicism and other faiths, offering ministry and programs for Catholicism and other faiths, while expressing its primary religious heritage (current sample scores:  $M$  sum score = 32.81;  $SD = 6.23$ ;  $\alpha = .851$ ).

The second section of the DMV inventory included 23 items, each rated along a 4-point scale (1 = *not at all important*; 4 = *very important*) that reflected how personally relevant a set of mission-driven activities supports the values and vision of the school in each of the three benchmark areas. The *urban and global engagement opportunities subscale* included 8 questions that reflected the importance of supporting the mission of the surrounding urban area (e.g., service learning) programs and global social engagement activities (e.g. study abroad and having international campus sites and students; current sample scores:  $M$  sum score = 28.78;  $SD = 4.91$ ;  $\alpha = .825$ ). The *institution's religious heritage subscale* included 9 questions that tapped into the importance of a set of very specific activities held at the university. This subscale may be modified to fit the needs of other universities and colleges (current sample scores:  $M$  sum score = 21.85;  $SD = 6.07$ ;  $\alpha = .870$ ). Finally, the *Catholic and other faith-formation opportunities subscale* included 6 questions that reflected the importance of faith-based activities, such as Catholic and interfaith worship services, religious education, and spiritual programs, and sacramental and other faith worship (current sample scores:  $M$  sum score = 24.55;  $SD = 9.09$ ;  $\alpha = .913$ ).

Participants also completed a variation of Roedel, Schraw, and Plake's (1994)

*Goals Inventory.* The instrument consisted of 15 items containing statements reflecting attitudes and behaviors characteristic of the goal orientations, as described by Dweck and Leggett (1988). Participants rated the degree to which each statement applied to them on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*). The 5-item mastery orientation subscale assessed students' focus on learning, new knowledge acquisition, and gaining competence (sample item: It is important for me to understand the content of the mission statement as completely as possible;  $M$  sum score = 15.41,  $SD$  = 5.03;  $\alpha$  = 0.89). The performance-approach orientation subscale contained 5 items assessing the motivation to outperform peers and demonstrate one's abilities (sample item: I am motivated by the thought of expressing mission and values more than my peers;  $M$  sum score = 12.18,  $SD$  = 4.50;  $\alpha$  = 0.83). The 5-item performance-avoidance subscale measured a person's desires to avoid undesirable outcomes (sample item: I just don't want to fail at incorporating DePaul's mission and values into my life;  $M$  sum score = 12.89,  $SD$  = 3.59;  $\alpha$  = 0.68).

In addition, participants completed Paulhus' (1998) *Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding* (BIDR). This scale contained 40 items rated along a 7-point Likert-type response scale (1 = *not true*; 7 = *very true*). Unlike other similar measures of social desirability (e.g., Crowne & Marlow, 1960), the BIDR separated social desirability into two separate but related concepts each measured by 20-items: self-enhancement and impression management. *Self-deceptive enhancement*

examined a person's tendency to engage in statements that exaggerate one's abilities and skills. In contrast, for the present study we used the *impression management* subscale ( $M$  sum score = 82.97,  $SD$  = 10.89;  $\alpha$  = 0.78), an assessment of one's tendency to present himself favorably to impress others. Items included *I almost always tell the truth* and *I sometimes drive faster than the speed limit*. Because with this scale a continuous scoring method (i.e., all answers are utilized) demonstrated strong convergent and internal validity (see Stober, Dette, & Musch, 2002), we decided in the present study to use the continuous scoring method in all data analyses.

#### Procedure

All traditional age undergraduate students enrolled at the school were recruited via email messages and asked to complete a confidential web-based survey. The survey included the mission and values inventory, the goal orientation scales, and the social desirability measure (in counterbalanced order), as well as demographic information (e.g., age, gender, cum GPA, race, year in school, and religious affiliation). Participants were offered a raffle for prizes (e.g. \$50 gift card to campus bookstore, iPod giveaway) as an incentive for responding. The survey took approximately 20-25 minutes to complete and was posted on the web for four to five weeks during the middle of the academic term.

In addition, we asked respondents whether they were involved in any university sponsored extra-curricular clubs, programs or activities. Based on the num-

ber of activities they reported, we calculated a *student engagement score* by adding the number of activities in which the person participated. Activities ranged from university ministry, student leadership, student club association, Catholic campus programs, and other extra-curricular, non-sport organizations. Engagement level groups were divided into those individuals who reported no engagement (0), some engagement (1), moderate engagement (2), and high engagement (3 or more activities).

## Results

### *Preliminary Analysis*

Table 1 presents the *zero order* correlates between social desirability tendencies and each of the psychometric scales, as well as the mean summary scores on the institution mission identity, mission-driven activities, and goal orientation subscales by engagement styles. We performed this preliminary analysis to determine whether there were any significant tendencies toward responding to our dependent measures in socially appropriate ways. As noted from the table, social desirability tendencies were significantly related to one of the *DMV* subscale scores and all three *GO* subscales. Although the magnitude of the correlation coefficients was rather small, we nevertheless entered social desirability responding into all further analyses as a co-variate.

### *Multivariate Analysis by Engagement Level*

A *multiple analysis of covariance* (MANCOVA), controlling for social desirability, was performed to compare the four

level of engagement groups on goal orientation style and mission identity and mission driven-activity scores (Wilks'  $\lambda$  criterion). Engagement level was significant ( $\lambda = 0.89$ ),  $F(8, 866) = 5.504$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate between-groups analyses indicated there were significant differences across engagement levels on both mission-identity subscales of the *DMV*, namely on the institution as inclusive and innovative,  $F(3, 1391) = 3.923$ ,  $p < .001$ , and a spirit of Catholic pluralism on campus,  $F(3, 1410) = 6.591$ ,  $p < .001$ . Also, there was a significant difference across engagement levels on two mission-driven activity *DMV* subscales, specifically urban/global engagement programs,  $F(3, 1483) = 4.748$ ,  $p < .003$ , and Catholic plus other faith-formation programs,  $F(3, 1589) = 11.783$ ,  $p < .001$ . In addition, univariate between-groups analyses indicated there were significant differences across engagement levels on each of the three goal orientation styles. That is, there was a main effect for engagement group by mastery orientation,  $F(3, 1151) = 23.45$ ,  $p < .001$ , performance-approach,  $F(3, 1151) = 13.41$ ,  $p < .001$ , and performance-avoidance,  $F(3, 1151) = 4.24$ ,  $p < .006$ .

Post hoc comparisons (Newman Keuls,  $p < .05$ ) then were performed. Across each of the different engagement groups (independent of social desirability), it appeared that students who were highly active in 3 or more extracurricular activities compared to students in other engagement groups indicated the strongest adherence to the mission-identity of their university and most highly valued the mission-driven activities (see Table 1). Specifically, these students believed the university was a place

that is inclusive and innovative in practice and had a sense of Catholic pluralism for varied faiths on campus. Students who were highly active in 3 or more extracurricular activities compared to students in other engagement groups also stated they believed programs on campus that involve urban and global participation and a chance to practice Catholic or other religious faith

were important programs. Furthermore, students involved in 3 or more campus related activities reported the strongest mastery, performance-approach, and performance avoidant goal orientations, compared to students in the other engagement groups (see Table 1).

### Discussion

Table 1 Zero-order Correlates with Social Desirability and Mean Sum Score for each Psychometric Scale by Students' Level of Engagement

	Social Desirability	Engagement Level Group			
		No (0) Engagement ( <i>n</i> = 334)	Some (1) Engagement ( <i>n</i> = 31)	Moderately (2) Engaged ( <i>n</i> = 132)	Highly (≥ 3) Engaged ( <i>n</i> = 8)
<i>DePaul Mission &amp; Values scales</i>					
inclusive and innovative	.044	54.19 <sup>a</sup> (10.61)	55.32 <sup>a</sup> (10.32)	55.55 <sup>a</sup> (10.28)	57.88 <sup>b</sup> (7.91)
Catholic pluralism	.032	32.47 <sup>a</sup> (10.32)	32.81 <sup>a,b</sup> (6.22)	33.45 <sup>b,c</sup> (6.37)	34.81 <sup>c</sup> (4.62)
Urban-global Engagement programs	.024	28.23 <sup>a</sup> (5.67)	28.72 <sup>a,b</sup> (4.81)	29.41 <sup>b,c</sup> (3.66)	29.50 <sup>c</sup> (3.56)
Religious heritage of University programs	.077*	21.73 (6.71)	21.90 (4.81)	21.95 (3.66)	22.52 (3.56)
Catholic & other faith formation programs	.043	24.13 <sup>a</sup> (10.06)	23.63 <sup>a</sup> (8.28)	25.74 <sup>b</sup> (7.48)	28.29 <sup>c</sup> (6.03)
<i>Goal-orientation scales:</i>					
Mastery	.131*	14.21 <sup>a</sup> (4.97)	15.54 <sup>b</sup> (4.99)	16.48 <sup>c</sup> (4.72)	17.89 <sup>d</sup> (4.55)
Performance approach	.150*	11.95 <sup>a</sup> (4.57)	12.95 <sup>b</sup> (4.45)	13.28 <sup>b</sup> (4.23)	14.38 <sup>c</sup> (4.23)
Performance avoidance	.199*	12.59 <sup>a</sup> (3.71)	12.95 <sup>a,b</sup> (3.45)	13.06 <sup>a,b</sup> (3.62)	13.63 <sup>b</sup> (3.44)

\*  $p < 0.001$

Note. Only 872 participants responded to the Engagement items. Values in parenthesis are standard deviation. Subscripts with different letters are significantly different (Newman Keuls,  $p < .05$ ).

The present study examined the institution mission perceptions and goal orientations tendencies of university students and how levels of engagement in campus activities might reflect differences in these perceptions.

Among the *DMV* subscales, perceptions on both mission-identity subscales (perceiving the school as inclusive and innovative and a sense of Catholic pluralism in operations) increased significantly with great campus engagement. The present study is consistent with Ferrari et al (2008) which found that student leaders of two or more campus clubs report more favorable impressions of the institution's mission identity, and it extends that study to demonstrate that such outcomes may be true for the student body in general. Relatedly, results of the present study demonstrate that at a faith based university (i.e., Roman Catholic) the student body appreciates and welcomes mission-driven activities such as Catholic and other faith-formation program opportunities, especially as students become more engaged in campus life. Highly engaged students compared to unengaged or lesser engaged students also welcomed civic and global community service programs that reflected the mission of the institution, but there was no significant difference between these groups in personal preference on programs related to the institution's religious, patron saint heritage. These results suggest that, at least at a faith-based institution, it may be important for administrators to develop mission-driven activities that support student development in spiritual rather than religious domains. That is, students may prefer opportunities to understand

their purpose in life, provide service to others, and explore personal values and meaning, over traditional worship programs. Clearly, more research in these domains is warranted.

We also hypothesized that goal orientation types would differ across levels of engagement; results supported our expectations. Specifically, students who reported increased engagement activity reported greater tendencies in mastery and performance goal orientations, compared to students with little or no engagement activity. Previous studies found goal orientation styles were malleable characteristics influenced by perception of environment and some interventions (Hoyert & O'Dell, 2006; Ryska et al., 1999). The present study supports these findings indicating that a campus setting that is supportive of faith-based objectives may play a role in goal orientation strategies. Interestingly, results indicated that performance avoidance levels were significantly stronger in highly engaged individuals, compared to unengaged or lesser engaged individuals. While we would expect mastery and performance approach goal styles to increase with great engagement, it is unclear why avoidance also rose with more activity. Future research on these three goal orientation styles would benefit from closer exploration of the similarities and differences among students' strategies.

The present study, of course, had limitations that future studies may address. For instance, previous studies examined levels of student engagement using multi-dimensional indices (e.g., Jimerson, Campos, & Grief, 2003). While an individual's presence in a group provides some quantitative



measure of the amount engagement, the quality of engagement is not necessarily correlated with the number of hours of participation (Gagne, 2003). Future studies may utilize multi-dimensional measures of engagement (e.g. Martin, 2007; Miller, Greene, Montalvo, Ravindran, & Nichols, 1996) to assess more specifically individual levels of engagement. Perhaps, behaviors of individuals differing in goal orientations will be distinguished in how they contribute to mission related activities. Future studies might seek to examine the lack of connection between engagement in campus activities and ratings towards two important cornerstones of the DMV's mission related activities subscales.

Nevertheless, university officials would do well to be aware if student interests' and values are changing at an urban institution, so that they may make efforts to sustain the livelihood and promote the presence of the institutional mission programs. Utilizing multidimensional tools to measure engagement may help clarify possible explanations for the disconnection. Perhaps, more elaborate analytical tools will lead to better insight regarding students' engagement behavior. Still, the present study indicates that one way to increase understanding and "embrace-ment" by students of their university's mission is for them to be highly involved in campus activities the promote the mission, vision, and values of the institution.

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