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PRIOR PERCEIVED DIFFICULTY AND ITS EFFECT ON EVENTUAL PERFORMANCE

Nicholas Kohler

Mentor: Michael Strube

With the rise of social media and other course evaluation websites, many students perform extensive research on their courses before enrolling, hoping to determine whether the course will be easy or difficult. Additionally, mentors of all types often introduce historically difficult coursework in a negative way, placing emphasis on the rigor of the subjects. This prior knowledge could have a significant effect on students' eventual performance in said courses. To determine whether or not this is the case, participants in this study were given an anagram task of 15 questions. One group was told the task would be difficult, and the other told nothing. The results show that participants told a final test would be difficult did much worse than their peers. $F(1, 74) = .016, p < .05$. Perhaps it is not to anyone's advantage to introduce difficult fields to young aspiring students in such a negative way.