

**Teaching of Psychology:
Ideas and Innovations**

**Sponsored by: Psychology Department of
Farmingdale State College**

**Proceedings of the 21th Annual Conference on
Undergraduate Teaching of Psychology
March 28–30, 2007**

Editors:

Katherine Zaromatidis, Ph.D.

Patricia A. Oswald, Ph.D.

Judith R. Levine, Ph.D.

Gene Indenbaum, Ph.D.

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Introduction

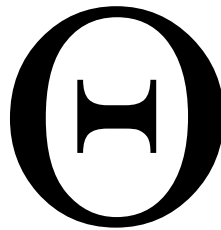
The 21st Annual Conference on Undergraduate Teaching of Psychology was held on March 28—30, 2007 at Hudson Valley Resort and Day Spa in Kerhonkson, NY. The conference was sponsored by the Psychology Department of Farmingdale State College.

The conference featured two keynote speakers—Dr. James Kalat, sponsored by Wadsworth Publishing Company, and Dr. Jeff Nevid, sponsored by Houghton Mifflin Publishing Company. Participants also had 25 presentations from which to choose, an array of publishers' displays to visit, and many colleagues, old and new, with whom to network. Ten of these presentations are included in these proceedings.

The success of the conference was due to the continuing efforts of many people. The conference committee was expertly chaired by Dr. Gene Indenbaum, who had the assistance of Dr. Marilyn Blumenthal, and Ms. Barbara Sarringer. Dr. Judith R. Levine served as the program chairperson. We would also like to extend our thanks to Wadsworth Publishing and Houghton Mifflin Publishing Company for arranging for the keynote speakers to join us.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

*The 21st Annual Conference
on Undergraduate
Psychology*



***TEACHING of PSYCHOLOGY:
IDEAS & INNOVATIONS***

presented by

***The Psychology Department
Of Farmingdale State College***

***CONFERENCE HELD AT HUDSON VALLEY
RESORT AND DAY SPA, KERHONKSON, NY***

March 28 - March 30, 2007

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

REGISTRATION: 2:00-2:30 p.m.

SESSION 1 2:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Room 1: ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Counselors as Teachers, Teachers as Counselors: The Process of Parallels
John A. Malacos, The University of Findlay, OH

Psychology faculty possess unique qualities unparalleled in academia: the ability to take their teaching attributes into counseling and their empathic counseling skills into their classrooms. Due to ethical boundaries, psychology faculty often view counseling and teaching processes as separate and distinct areas. This presentation will highlight the positive, powerful benefits of the parallel processes of counseling and teaching and will explore seven areas of comparison. Through ethical integration of the processes, psychology faculty can enhance their impact on student learning.

Searching for Professor Right
Roberta T. Paley*, Fashion Institute of Technology, SUNY, NY
Joseph H. Moskowitz, New Jersey City University, NJ

The search process for a new faculty member can be long and arduous as well as interesting and entertaining. This study utilized a questionnaire given to psychology and other liberal arts faculty to determine the types of topics and questions that search committees are likely to ask during the interview process. While faculty ask about teaching experience, publications and research, and technological knowledge, what are they actually looking for in the all important face-to-face interview? How does a search committee know they have found "Professor Right"? Come to hear some creative questions and share some that worked for your search committee.

Room 2: PANEL PRESENTATION

Course Management Systems, Past, Present, and Future
James Regan, Hugh Knickerbocker, & Jodi Allen, Marist College, NY

Electronic course management systems (CMS) have become a part of both the college classroom and the virtual classroom. Colleges and universities have relied on commercial software products to

either augment classroom experience or move the classroom to the internet. A new open source software, Sakai, is currently in development and will compete and complement the other CMS. This panel will review the history of CMS and present the results of a recent survey comparing Sakai to a commercial model.

SESSION 2: 3:45 – 4:45 p.m.

Room 1: ORAL PRESENTATIONS

The Hybrid Course: Comparison to Traditional and Distance Learning Courses Patricia A. Oswald & Katherine Zaromatidis, Iona College, NY

The hybrid course, a new initiative at Iona College, requires a combination of classroom time and electronic time (i.e. Blackboard, WebCT, etc). This new format will be compared to traditional and distance learning formats and advantages and disadvantages of each will be discussed. In addition, examples from various courses will be used to illustrate the format and organizational strategies for such courses.

Using Blogs to Teach Psychology Courses Margaret D. Anderson*, SUNY Cortland, NY

While blogs have become commonplace website formats on the Internet, they have still to be widely used in teaching college courses. This presentation will review a variety of ways the presenter has used blogs in her teaching. Blogs have been used to maintain private, individual journals for courses; coordinate group interaction within courses; and facilitate activities across courses. This presentation will focus specifically on the use of the Live Journal system. It will review considerations for establishing blog communities, practical considerations for using the blogs, and advantages as well as disadvantages of using blogs.

Room 2: PANEL PRESENTATION

Undergraduate Egocentrism: Implications for College Teaching Paul D. Schwartz, Lawrence Force, Amanda Maynard, & Sarah Uzelac, Mount Saint Mary College, NY

Dr. Elkind developed the Imaginary Audience Scale and Personal Fable Scale in 1967 as a means of quantifying the behavioral correlates of adolescent egocentrism. The presenters' past study revisited these scales with today's adolescent and found somewhat different results than Dr. Elkind and his colleagues found. Rather than just a dissipation of both measures of egocentrism, the presenters

found an increase in egocentrism among younger college students. The hypothesis that Dr. Elkind and the presenters are examining in this study is a belief that egocentrism in adolescence, rather than diminishing in late adolescence, increases when an individual encounters a new environment or experience. The formation of this panel is an attempt to discuss and learn from other professionals and students about the changing nature of today's college student and how it impacts those of us at the college level that teach them.

Note: An * after a name denotes session chairperson.

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Reception: 6:00-7:00 p.m.
(Including Complimentary Wine & Beer)

Dinner: 7:00 p.m.

Invited Address:
Dr. James Kalat
*“Recent Developments in Biological
Psychology”*

*Speaker and Reception Courtesy of
Wadsworth Publishing*

After Dinner: Hospitality Room
(Including Complimentary Wine & Beer)

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Breakfast: 8:00 – 9:30

SESSION 3: 9:30 - 10:30

Room 1: ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Mission Accomplished: Constructing Learning Online
Anne M.W. Kelly, Dakota Wesleyan University, SD

The purpose of this project was to respond to criticisms and concerns that online courses are too often taught as multiple directed studies, which may jeopardize the importance of face-to-face interaction in learning, interpersonal support, and ultimately, the mission of liberal arts universities. Discussion groups, problem-based learning assignments, and online experiments were among methods used to transform an online General Psychology course into an online class governed by a student-centered approach to teaching.

The Specifics of Group Discussions Within On-line Psychology Classes
Anna Toom*, Touro College, NY

The on-line group discussion, a new version of traditional teaching methods, has some specific features. A delayed written communication with a wide use of Internet-based resources often turns a lukewarm exchange of trivial opinions into goal-oriented, argumentative, and informative dialogues between students. The virtual classroom stimulates unusually open self-expression and comfort in sharing personal concerns and moves conversation to a profound emotional level. Thus, on-line discussions in psychology classes have a potential to create favorable conditions for development of participants' critical thinking and interpersonal communication. The proposal describes specific traits of on-line discussions and provides recommendations for their effective organization.

Room 3: WORKSHOP

Writing High-quality Multiple-choice Questions
David DiBattista, Brock University, Ontario, Canada

Multiple-choice tests are the most widely used form of objective assessment in university settings, but using them effectively is not always a simple matter. Because writing high-quality items requires some expertise we will consider guidelines that can make the task easier. Some of the topics to be covered include the format of the stem (sentence completion vs. question), the use of

negation, generating plausible distracters, and the use of “none of the above” and “all of the above.” Participants are encouraged to bring along multiple-choice items from their own classes to work with during the session.

SESSION 4: 10:40 – 11:40 a.m.

Room 1: ORAL PRESENTATIONS

The Integration of Tangential Readings into Psychology and Human Services Courses Edward J. Murray & Carol A. Puthoff Murray, Kent State University Ashtabula, OH

This presentation will examine students’ ability to examine critically real world narrative and relate these contemporary living realities to the theoretical constructs, research and models presented in Psychology and Human Service courses. In presenting students’ ideas, the process of content analysis provides the techniques to describe and evaluate these essays.

Techniques for Student Revisions

Brandi Scruggs & Emily G. Soltano*, Worcester State College, MA

College faculty universally struggle to develop effective teaching techniques which encourage student retention of course material and necessary self-assessment skills. We will discuss different techniques in which students revise their own work or their peers’ work, including correcting missed exam questions and assessment of written papers. These techniques can be incorporated into any course, and feedback from students indicates that this approach is highly effective in encouraging retention of course material and increasing writing sophistication for APA style papers. The efficacy of these teaching techniques will be discussed.

Room 3: WORKSHOP

Assessing Higher-level Cognitive Skills with Multiple-choice Questions David DiBattista, Brock University, Ontario, Canada

Multiple-choice tests are often criticized for focusing on students’ memory for facts and for failing to assess higher-level cognitive skills. Strategies exist for creating multiple-choice items that assess higher-level cognitive skills, but many instructors do not seem to use them. In this workshop, we will consider how to use the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy, item shells, and interpretive exercises to write multiple-choice items that assess higher-level cognitive skills rather than rote memory. Participants are encouraged to bring along some multiple-choice items from their own classes to work with during the session.

COFFEE BREAK: 11:40-12:10

SESSION 5: 12:10 – 1:10 p.m.

Room 1: ORAL PRESENTATIONS

The Role of Culture in Shaping Egyptian Students' Reactions to a Clinical Psychology Course

Hani Henry, The American University in Cairo, Cairo, Egypt

I will present a collection of reactions made by Egyptian undergraduate psychology students who were asked about their preferred psychotherapeutic approach in a written assignment. Since the field of clinical psychology is almost non-existent in Egypt, the students' responses were heavily influenced by the Egyptian culture and were very colored by the students' collectivistic self-construal. Religion also took a central role in the students' appraisal of the most effective therapeutic approaches. I will also describe my personal experiences in teaching the class. Specifically, I will attempt to make a qualitative comparison between Egyptian and American students in this regard.

Multiculturalism in the Classroom: Implications for Instruction

Stephanie Domenici*, CUNY Graduate Center & Queensborough Community College, CUNY, NY

The celebration and valuing of diversity derive from a core understanding that there may be differing interpretations of similar material. By delving into those differing interpretations, cultural difference can be acknowledged and addressed while at the same time valuing a direct approach to "getting the material understood correctly." The key to "multicultural" teaching is to establish conditions for dialogue, to encourage expression of opinion, to explore differences, and to reach some common parameters for interpretation. The idea is to create a space where competing interpretations can be respected, examined, and evaluated.

Room 3: ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Teaching to Reach: Meeting the Needs of Students Today

Carol E. Bailey, Rochester Community and Technical College, MN

This roundtable discussion will benefit all persons who are interested in discovering teaching strategies and activities that will reach students with different learning styles. Tools for assessing individual learning styles will be discussed with an opportunity to assess one's own learning style.

Discussion will center on how to meet individual learning styles in our teaching so all students are reached. Come prepared to discuss learning style assessment tools that you or your school use as well as teaching activities and strategies that are working for you in meeting individual learning styles.

Note: An * after a name denotes session chairperson.

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Lunch: 1:15-3:15 p.m.

Invited Address:

Dr. Jeff Nevid

***“Getting the Signal. Using Signaling
Techniques to
Help Students Become More Effective
Learners”***

Speaker and Reception Courtesy of

Houghton Mifflin Publishing

SESSION 6: 3:30 – 5:00

Room 1: ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Sitcoms: Trash or Treasure? Using Situation Comedies to Enhance Learning
Dean M. Amadio & Supriya Poonati, Siena College, NY

Various psychological constructs will be demonstrated using scenes from several popular sitcoms including South Park, Sex and the City, Seinfeld, The Simpsons, and Friends. Participants will receive an additional list of sitcom episodes suitable for demonstrating specific psychological concepts.

Examining the Portrayal of Premenstrual Syndrome in Television Sitcoms in Psychology Courses
Rhea Parsons*, Borough of Manhattan Community College, NY

Over the years television sitcoms have evolved to address serious topics in order to educate while entertaining. The portrayal of premenstrual syndrome (PMS), however, continues to be skewed and potentially harmful. Although a legitimate medical condition, women with PMS on television exhibit one main symptom, bitchiness, while men are given the sympathetic role of victim. Using clips from popular sitcoms, the medical, psychological and sociological implications of these misrepresentations are examined to address the issue that PMS can be no laughing matter.

Room 2: ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Prolegomena to Future Psychologists: Evolutionary General Psychology
Jonathan Springer, Kean University, NJ

Using evolutionary theory to investigate human behavior in the general psychology course may involve all of the standard areas of psychology. Rather than isolating the evolutionary perspective (e.g. neuroscience, developmental, etc.) it is better, as well as easier to expand to all areas. This promotes better student learning and understanding, better teaching, as well as utilization for the eventual Psychology major. The major approaches in the perspective (human behavioral ecology, evolutionary psychology, gene-culture coevolution, and memetics) are discussed and integrated into a standard general psychology course.

Educating Students about Teratogenic Effects
Mary M. Todd, University of Pittsburgh at Bradford, PA

Glasses and eggs are used to demonstrate the effects of various direct and metaphorical influences on baby health. The class is asked to predict outcomes for individuals described in a case study manner by the instructor and represented within the demonstration. Direct instruction includes categorization of teratogens, and the demonstration is debriefed by eliciting and discussing student predictions. The demonstration is used as a basis for discussing teratogens and extending the discussion of embryonic development.

Student Excuses and Motivation
Grant Leitma*, Columbia Union College, MD

As classroom instructors, we always seem to encounter a variety of excuses from students for missing exam dates, late submission of assignments, and class tardiness. As a result, we find ourselves spending more time with course administrative issues rather than time focused on classroom instruction. Over the past 25 years, I have collected and organized student excuses from the mundane to the truly novel and creative. This presentation will cover ten broad areas of student excuses and discuss possible ways to motivate students to change their behaviors.

Note: An * after a name denotes session chairperson.

Reception: 6:00-7:00 p.m.
(Including Complimentary Wine & Beer)

Dinner: 7:00p.m.

After Dinner: Hospitality Suite
(Including Complimentary Wine & Beer)

Friday, March 30, 2007

Breakfast: 8:00-9:30

SESSION 7: 9:30 - 10:40

Room 1: ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Using Ingredients to Teach Developmental Synthesis
Mary M. Todd, University of Pittsburg at Bradford, PA

Characterization of Prescott's synthesis model of development (physical, social, self, peer, coping, and affection) are represented by ingredients and their measurements creating four different individuals (as enacted by students). The class is asked to predict outcomes for each individual and through demonstration, nature and nurture influences are acknowledged along with the point that no solid predictions are possible. This activity incorporates personal and then general discussion about genetic and environmental influences on personal growth and development. It serves as a strong attention getter as an introduction to developmental issues.

Room 3: ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Horney Goes Hollywood: Using Films to Teach Personality Theory
Dante Mancini & Herman Huber, College of Saint Elizabeth, NJ

Introducing personality theories to undergraduates in an accessible, engrossing way can be a challenging task. This roundtable discussion will present ten carefully selected and widely available films—both classic and current—featuring characters that exemplify specific concepts in psychoanalytic, humanistic, social-cognitive, behavioral, and trait theories that students can effectively identify and examine. Participants will be presented with several film clip examples, a thorough list of the illustrated theoretical concepts, and instructions for a comprehensive writing assignment designed to encourage students' critical thinking and application skills. Furthermore, participants will have an opportunity to discuss their own practices in using films to teach personality theory.

COFFEE BREAK AND
HOTEL CHECK-OUT TIME: 10:40 -11:20 a.m.

SESSION 8: 11:20– 12:30

Room 1: ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Studying How Students Study

William R. Balch, Penn State, Altoona, PA

In simulated study-test sessions, students were instructed either that they would be studying for a multiple-choice test or that they would be studying for a written short-answer test. Then they received the same study material, and they also all received the same multiple-choice test. Students expecting a short-answer test actually scored significantly higher on the multiple-choice test than those expecting a multiple-choice test. Students also rated several aspects of their studying and test-taking. The results suggest that normally students may not study in an optimal way for multiple-choice tests.

Testing Elaboration Learning in Varied Contexts

Robert A. Dushay*, Morrisville State College, NY

Students taught a group-based elaboration studying technique as part of a Practical Study Skills course were able to boost their test performance by as much as a letter grade (Dushay, TOP-2006). Replications of the technique demonstrate that the results are easily duplicated, and that the procedure can be adopted outside of a formal study skills course. Data from these replications will be presented, along with preliminary data testing whether the improvement is the result of elaboration studying or simply from additional review time with the professor.

Room 2: ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Making Effective Use of Non-clinical Case Study Materials

Craig Platt, Franklin Pierce College, NH

Many psychology instructors have found innovative ways to use non-clinical narrative materials—including biographies, fictional short stories and novels, and theatrical films—to illustrate course content and to encourage students to apply theoretical principles. The purpose of this roundtable session is to give participants an opportunity to exchange their own suggestions and questions regarding such case study materials and how to use them effectively. What specific items have you found to be effective in particular courses, and how do you use them? Materials from the session facilitator's Introductory Psychology, Adult Development, and Personality Courses will be available.

Lunch 12:30 p.m.

Conference Committee:

Gene Indenbaum, Chairperson

Judith R. Levine, Program Subcommittee Chairperson

Marilyn Blumenthal, Conference Program Editor & Keynote Speaker Liason

Barbara Sarringer, Executive Assistant

**Counselors as Teachers, Teachers as Counselors:
The Process of Parallels**

John A. Malacos, Ph. D., The University of Findlay

*The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates.
The great teacher inspires.*

-William Arthur Ward-

Questions to Consider:

- How can we as counselors or therapists teach more effectively and how can we as teachers or faculty counsel or help more effectively?
- What can we learn from each discipline to enhance the lives of those we teach and/or counsel?
- How can the similar characteristics found in teaching and counseling be used to strengthen counseling relationships and positively reinforce teacher-student relationships?

Connections:

- The helping professions of teaching and counseling often contain individuals with similar altruistic characteristics motivations



and

- Teaching and Counseling are processes that share parallel components; Teachers and Counselors share parallel techniques and approaches

- Counselors have very specialized skills and helping characteristics that aid them in connecting with clients and helping clients to make change. At times – counselors must TEACH clients
- Counselors are teachers who have very specialized skills and altruistic characteristics that aid them in connecting with students and helping students to learn and grow. At times – teachers must COUNSEL students
- The teaching and counseling particular process of parallels can be a GREAT thing. How do we use it for good?
- The assumption is that within appropriate ethical boundaries, counselors teach clients and teachers counsel students, while they fulfill their career responsibilities
- Professionals who enter the careers of teaching and counseling use similar skills and often face similar experiences, challenges and frustrations.
- Faculty possess unique qualities unparalleled in academia: the ability to take their teaching attributes into counseling and their empathic counseling skills into their classrooms

~ A Colloquial Fact: Counselors Teach and Teachers Counsel ~

Professional Shared Areas:

- **Effective personal characteristics**
 - Knowledge and awareness of self
 - Empathic
 - Effective communicator
 - Sensitive and responsive to diversity

- Strong sense of personal and professional ethics
 - Able to set and enforce limits
 - Passionate about counseling and teaching
- **Systematic process**
 - The **process** of counseling and teaching involves a planned approach of guiding clients and students from the initial time of meeting until termination of sessions of the end of classes
 - Okun (2008), Young (2004), Murphy & Dillon (1998), Brems (1999), Doyle (2003), Epstein & Brown (2001), Kottler (2000), Gerber (2003), and Corey & Corey (2006) advocate a process of counseling that involves initial relationship building, a plan for change, and termination. In comparison, teaching works effectively when relationships are built, lesson plans are developed, and assessments of class experiences are created and evaluated
- **Building relationships**
 - Key to effective counseling and teaching
 - The essence of the “art” of helping
 - Requires the counselor and teach to be open, honest and an effective communicator
 - Begins from the first moment of connection and is a continuous process through termination or the last day of classes
- **Motivating students/clients to learn and grow**
 - Accentuate the positive – praise any moments of growth
 - Recognize that clients’/students’ beliefs about themselves impact their growing and learning
 - Only when counselors/teachers are motivated themselves will they add fuel to the sparks that surround the learning/growing process

- **Evaluating and assessing change**
 - On-going process
 - Begins with the first day of class or the first session and involves collecting data about clients/students and determining baseline levels
 - Continues through the course of therapy or throughout the semester with evaluations of achievement of sections of the treatment plan or classroom tests/projects
 - Concludes with determining whether growth and learning at termination are different than baseline levels

- **Transfer of learning**
 - Encourage clients/students to remember not just **what** they learned, but also **how** they learned and grew
 - Recognize that most growing and learning occur outside the classroom or counselor's office

- **Mentoring/modeling**
 - Involves setting examples of appropriate behavior and attitude
 - The heart of mentoring is the development of an open, confidential and trusting relationship
 - Mentors guide but real growth occurs when the clients/students actually do what is necessary to make changes

Power and Process of Parallels: The Benefits

- **Students**
 - Students receive benefits from faculty or teachers who model caring and empathic behavior and the facilitation of their counseling knowledge,

skills, and personal awareness

- Students are able to learn from teachers who do not ask them to do anything the teacher has not done or will not do
- Teachers mentor and model how to motivate clients by actually motivating students and instilling hope and positive attitudes about growth and change

- **Clients**

- Clients receive benefits from counselors who model caring and empathetic behavior and the facilitation of clients' personal growth and change, and personal awareness.
- Clients can intuit whether counselors “live” what and how they suggest and teach their clients live
- Clients are able to learn from counselors who do not ask them to do anything the counselor has not done or will not do

- **Teachers or Faculty**

- Teachers gain from being able to take on numerous helpful, parallel roles with their students while utilizing the parallel personal characteristics of counselors and teachers
- They can support and challenge, implement and model culturally-responsive teaching techniques that show students how to do these things in their professional work
- At the same time, teachers can take on counseling/supportive roles which allow them to help students learn the life knowledge, skills, and personal awareness they can in turn teach their clients



- **The Counseling Profession**

- Numerous positive and powerful benefits of the parallel processes of counseling and teaching that include seven areas of overlap
- Through ethical and appropriate integration of the teaching and counseling processes, teachers and students can be highly effective and genuine professionals
- Offers an expanded view of the counseling profession and the teaching profession. We play many roles and have a variety of impacts in the lives of our students and their clients and perhaps our own clients.
- In counseling practice and educationally, our students will become stronger counselors due to the parallel processes implemented by their teachers
- Providing a strong base of knowledge for counselors to teach their clients and for teachers to help their students has the potential to enhance job performance and provide greater benefits for students, clients, counselors, teachers, and to the field

The Future?

- The impact of these parallel processes could influence how we train future faculty members and therapists
- The areas of overlap may encourage full time faculty members to see the viability of establishing a practice as well as clinicians adding part time teaching to their professional work load

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*** Information for this presentation was also provided by Andrea Dixon Rayle, Associate Professor at Arizona State University. Dr. Rayle is currently a professor in the school psychology program at The University of Florida.**

Course Management Systems, Past, Present and Future

James Regan, PhD

Hugh Knickerbocker

Jodi Allen

Electronic course management systems (CMS) are now a common aspect of the college campus. These systems provide an opportunity for students to be engaged in academic pursuits outside of the traditional classroom. This can be done either totally online through the internet or in a hybrid manner in which the classroom experience is augmented by the course management system. Researchers have explored the impact of this instructional format in the delivery of specific course content (Faux & Black-Hughes, 2000, Van Soest, Canon & Grant, 2000), instructional efficacy (Cauble & Thurston, 2000) and student attitude and satisfaction (Cauble & Thurston, 2000, Wernet, Olliges & Delicath, 2000, Schoech, 2000). Interestingly, satisfaction for these new tools is mixed (Allen, Mabry, Mattrey, Bourhais, Titsworth & Burrel, 2004). What is clear however is that these CMS have become part of academic life. A report from the National Center for Education Statistics projected that 90 percent of public four year colleges and over 50% of private colleges were offering online and or distance learning courses in the academic year 2001-2002 (Waitys & Lewis, 2003).

Initial implementation of CMS programs may have been delayed due to the high cost of implementing such a system (Minielli & Ferris, 2005). Nonetheless, numerous CMS have proliferated and the three most popular are Blackboard, WebCT and eCollege. In 2003 Blackboard has a 46 percent share of the CMS market.

In 2004 a number of Universities who had a proprietary CMS, worked together to develop an open source software that would be available to all at no charge. The project's aim is to create "...a unique course management system that both competes with and complements commercial systems such as...Blackboard" (Wikipedia, 2006). The project is titled Sakai and

has continuing funding from the Mellon Foundation. There is considerable interest in this project for obvious reasons and as such, suitability and satisfaction will be paramount for success.

The history of CMS implementation demonstrates an evolving approach to CMS. A recent survey that was completed compared a commercial model and Sakai. The data was based on the results of a survey that contained 24 items pertaining Course Managements Systems (CMS) and given at two separate occasions to a sample of 28 students. The student sample was given the same survey at two different times, once before using Sakai and again following the use of Sakai for a semester. The sample was told to consider the current Marist College CMS, eLearning, when responding for the first time to the survey. For the second round of the survey, the sample was told to only consider the Sakai CMS when responding. Statistical comparisons between the two sample responses on the CMS survey were made using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. Frequencies on specific questions were also compared. Results begin to demonstrate the advantages and differences between the two models. There were significant differences between both the commercial model and Sakai. The commercial model was ranked higher on such items as calendar, links and the help function. Sakai was found significantly different in that students felt the overall CMS was more enjoyable and they were more likely to take an on-line course with the Sakai CMS.

The Hybrid Course: Comparison to Traditional and Distance Learning Courses

Katherine Zaromatidis, Ph.D. and Patricia Oswald, Ph.D.

Iona College

At Iona College, hybrid and distance learning courses are relatively new initiatives. Distance learning courses are completed entirely online (no class meetings), whereas hybrid courses require a combination of classroom time and electronic time. Elective and major courses in psychology are offered in this format. BlackBoard (BB) is the platform used for distance learning and hybrid courses at Iona College. Typically, students enrolling in these non-traditional courses have taken at least one introductory psychology course. Most are psychology majors. These formats are a particularly attractive option for working students. This paper will provide an overview of BlackBoard; a comparison of traditional, distance learning, and hybrid courses; a discussion of the challenges unique to distance learning and hybrid formats; and suggestions for faculty who may want to develop distance learning or hybrid courses.

Overview of BlackBoard

BlackBoard Learning System (Release 6) includes many features that permit customization of the delivery of course content. It is easy to manage course announcements, documents, assignments, and exams. Tracking options permit the instructor to identify what materials students are accessing and when they are doing so. Other options can be added and settings can be modified. One of the most important BB features is that all of the course content can be created and sequenced ahead of time. The “display on/off dates” option can be used to create daily, weekly or permanent announcements, to schedule exams, and to make discussion boards available.

There are a number of useful tools in BB that permit communication between faculty and students, and between students and their classmates. One such feature is the Discussion Board (DB)—an electronic class discussion. The DB enables students to respond to a topic or question that the instructor posts and to respond to each other. Discussion boards are asynchronous, which is convenient for the instructor and the students. However, BB does offer a chat option for those who prefer synchronous discussions. In addition, BB permits the instructor to email all,

some, or individual students enrolled in the course. There is also a feature that permits students to email each other. BlackBoard's Digital Drop Box feature can be used to send papers, notes, and other documents. Documents can be created in Word and imported to BB through a browse and link feature or they can be created directly in BB (e.g., syllabus, handouts, exam review sheet).

The BB Gradebook feature is easy to use and includes most functions that are available in other grading software. All enrolled users can automatically be loaded in the course gradebook. Weighting options for each graded assignment, status of test taking (i.e., completed, in progress, not taken), and individual and group statistics are available. Building exams in BB offers many features as well. The instructor can use a course cartridge provided by the textbook publisher, build one question at a time from an electronic test bank, or import an exam completed using another testing program. BB creates an automatic announcement for each exam. Exams settings include: (a) allowing single or multiple attempts, (b) forcing completion the first time the exam is launched, (c) a timer function, and (d) a password function. Moreover, to foster honest work on exams, the instructor may choose to randomize questions for each attempt, limit feedback to students after completion (e.g., number correct, or correct answer, or correct answer with explanation), present questions one at a time, and prohibit backtracking to previous questions.

Challenges and Strategies in Teaching Distance Learning Courses

Inevitably, there will be students who enroll in a DL course and then “disappear.” Also, there are the students who find themselves “in over their heads.” These issues occur in traditional courses as well but making a connection with students that you have never met poses additional challenges. Moreover, technological problems do occur, particularly with exams, so monitoring the course site and your email during exam periods is essential.

Based on my experiences in teaching distance learning courses, the following suggestions are offered.

- Choosing a text book for a DL course is critically important—perhaps even more so than for a traditional course. Using a publisher that has good downloadable ancillary material or

provides links to text book companion websites is quite helpful. This enables the instructor to provide PowerPoint slides, chapter outlines, practice tests, and more with minimal time and effort.

- Posting an introductory announcement three or more weeks before semester begins for those browsing the course site is also useful in marketing your course and in providing information for students who are considering the DL format for the first time.
- Creating week-by-week announcements ahead of time is a great convenience and time saver during hectic points during the semester.
- Early and frequent contact with students is essential. Emailing students at the start of term with instructions about how to access course site, features of BB, etc. and requiring an email response from them works well.

The Hybrid Course

The hybrid course at Iona is a marriage of the traditional course and the distance learning course. This option was created in response to some of the difficulties with pure distance learning courses. Results of a pilot study indicated students did not like the lack of contact with the professor and their fellow classmates. Many students stated they procrastinated completing work, while others “drifted” completely from the course. Other disadvantages of distance learning courses included difficulties with independent note-taking and the lack of opportunity to ask questions during exams.

In order to address these disadvantages two hybrid course options were created for students: hybrids that meet one hour a week and hybrids that meet for two hours a week. The most challenging aspect of both options is deciding how to use in-class time. The distance learning component of the hybrid course can be structured in a very similar manner to the pure distance learning course.

In-class time of the hybrid course can be divided among coverage of key course material, administration of exams, and student oral presentations. Since time is limited, not all topics can be covered by the course instructor. Therefore consideration of which topics to include in lectures should be based in part on the difficulty of the material. For example, Piaget’s stages of

cognitive development are difficult for students to self-learn as they include much new terminology. Such a topic could be covered during in-class discussion, whereas easier topics might be left for students to cover independently. Of course topics that are inherently more interesting to students, such as prenatal development and the effects of various teratogens, would also be better suited to independent learning. “Drier” material could be reserved for class time, where instructors may employ a variety of strategies such as demonstrations, group activities, etc to make material more interesting for students.

Use of class time for exam administration would eliminate some of the difficulties of on-line testing. There is much concern among distance learning course instructors regarding student cheating on exams. Various strategies can be used to inhibit student cheating, such as open book tests, timed exams, etc. but none of these options can eliminate cheating. In-class testing would enhance the integrity of exams. In addition, in-class testing would eliminate the need to deal with electronic “glitches”. Often times exams freeze during administration, thus instructors must continually monitor their email for distress signals from students. Exams have to be reset and students must start over. It is not unheard of for the same student to have to make multiple attempts before being able to successfully complete the exam. In-class testing would obviously eliminate this inconvenience to the instructor and student.

Finally, hybrid courses offer the opportunity for student’s to conduct oral presentations enhancing their public speaking skills. Students are allowed to choose a topic from a number of topics preselected by the instructor. Allowing the students to work in groups rather than individually offers some advantages. First, there is typically not enough class time available for students to conduct individual presentations. Second, those with public speaking anxiety prefer the group format as they don’t have to stand in the front of the room alone. Lastly, group members can help each other with various components of the presentation when needed. Grades for the presentations can be assigned for the whole group or individually based on the preference of the instructor.

In conclusion, both the traditional and the distance learning courses offer advantages and disadvantages to students and instructors. The hybrid course was created to offset some of the disadvantages of the distance learning format. Further research is planned to examine the

student response to this new format.

The Specifics of Group Discussions within On-line Psychology Classes

Anna Toom, Ph.D.

Touro College, New York

Group discussions are an essential component of my on-line psychology courses. Unlike others individually oriented on-line activities, they may seem to be just a version of traditional teaching methods. However, on-line group discussions have some specific features.

Unlike communication in a classroom, which is oral, on-line communication is written and requires ideas to be expressed in a more precise and organized manner. It makes on-line discussions **more goal-oriented**.

A traditional classroom discussion typically consists of ad hoc improvisations. The on-line communication, on the contrary, provides a possibility for preliminary preparation, focused thinking and clearer formulation of thoughts. Instead of spontaneous exchange of unprepared opinions, it makes possible a **more thoughtful exchange of ideas**.

On-line learning promotes a wide use of Internet-based resources. Supporting scientific data can be found in the course of the discussion. As a result, discussions by Internet elevate the students to a more sophisticated level of dealing with knowledge. Hasty exchange of trivial, precocious, and ill-founded ideas goes away and gives place to an **argumentative and informative dialogue**.

Unlike face-to-face communication which may often provoke shyness or a feeling of being intimidated, the virtual classroom stimulates unusually open self-expression and even a specific comfort in exchanging personal concerns related to the topic of discussion. It moves students' discussions to a **more profound emotional level**. The modern individualistic and competitive society does not provide many possibilities for open-minded and warm interpersonal communication. It seems that the on-line group discussion is often welcomed as it satisfies this human need and provides protection.

On-line group discussions seem to create beneficial conditions for fostering students' development in both cognitive and emotional aspects. A better support and organization of on-

line discussions is vital for enhancing students' critical thinking and interpersonal communication within on-line psychology classes.

Based on my seven years experience in teaching various psychology courses on the Internet, I tried to develop some useful recommendations for an effective organization of on-line group discussions. These recommendations include a) determining appropriate questions for the discussion, b) announcing guidelines for participants, and c) choosing an adequate instructor's behavioral tactics for handling the discussion.

Abundance of competing theories, none of which may be completely discarded, is specific of psychology as a science. In this connection, according to my experience, **questions allowing for a multitude of correct answers** are the most stimulating. They naturally lead to group discussions. Students working alone do not always look at a problem from different perspectives and theoretical orientations, while a cooperating group of them does. Examples of stimulating questions are:

- *Is a little child's speech egocentric or social? – Who was right, Piaget or Vygotsky?*
- *Why did the Humanistic Education Movement fail?*
- *How do you explain the fact that the neuron has many dendrites and only one axon?*

I noticed that the discussion becomes very productive when **students are given freedom to choose partners in and intensity of an on-line communication**. At the same time, some strict rules are necessary, including supporting proposed ideas with scientific facts, respect for other opinions, and following net-etiquette (speech etiquette).

I found that discussions become especially interesting if **I, the instructor, restrict my domination and allow members of the group to take a part in its leadership**. When students with well developed communicational skills, curious, and knowledgeable are allowed to take lead, they become very helpful in creating thought-provoking atmosphere in our virtual classroom. They make a significant contribution to the discussion content. Their example encourages others, and sometimes all participants become equal partners in the dialogue, all looking for the truth.

The Integration of A Tangential Reading Into Psychology Courses

Edward J. Murray, Ph.D., Kent State University Ashtabula

Carol A. Puthoff Murray, M.A. Kent State University Ashtabula

INTRODUCTION

Kent State University created a summer reading program for entry-level students. This reading assignment was related to classroom papers and early orientation meetings and discussions. For multiple reasons, regional campuses have not participated in this program. However during the academic year, Kent State University Ashtabula faculty has assigned readings to students in Psychology courses. Other disciplines have followed similar patterns using the same resources

METHODOLOGY

In psychology courses, students were required to read the following book, Jihad vs. McWorld, (Barber, 1995, 2001). The Psychology students were expected to take materials from Jihad vs. McWorld and relate these concepts with models and research discussed in Psychology of Adjustment and Organizational/ Industrial Psychology. During the fall semester of 2006, the Ashtabula campus held a professional conference that focused on the issues raised in Jihad vs. McWorld

RESULTS

Psychology of Adjustment

The Psychology of Adjustment course was a combinational experience in that students were expected to read Corey and Corey's I Never Knew I had a Choice (2002) and relate the

concepts to various personality models. This applied engagement was then used as a theoretical base to evaluate Benjamin Barber's Jihad vs. McWorld (1995). The question asked focused on this issue: How does the applied work of Corey and Corey combined with theoretical models of personality interrelate with the changing world perspective of Barber?

Many students concentrated on the themes of factory closings, off shoring and outsourcing. These events highlighted changes in Latin America and China with examples of Ford Motor Company's presence in Mexico and India.

These students described the spiral down effect that reflected descending impact of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The victims did not participate in the 35 trillion dollar global economy. They were left to pick up the pieces of their life after the confrontation of displacement.

On a personal level, they gave accounts about a loss of self-esteem combined with a decreased sense of identity. With vivid narrative, they depicted an environment without purpose and goals that placed the individual in a void.

Other students narrated stories about a society totally captured by the entertainment media of television, cinema, video, computer games, music videos and computer entertainment with Hollywood Stars and American Idols.

These students emphasized the importance of Bandura's Social Learning Model. They hypothesized that United States young people were impacted by Britney Spears and Anna Nicole Smith. The value of libido permeated the social climate and consumerism became the model to emulate. They asked some serious questions about those issues. In this climate, how does a person develop Howard Gardner's Interpersonal Intelligence, Intrapersonal Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence?

Within this motif, some students elaborated further on Hollywood. They gave examples

of "off a cop" or "whore women" and showed that these images contributed to the negative impact of Social Learning. They also pointed out that the entertainment industry used positive reinforcement to support these behaviors.

Other reflections on Jihad vs. McWorld concentrated on the bottom 40 percent of the United States and the large proportions of China and India that work for below \$1.00 per day. These students developed themes about Selye's Stress Model and Dollard and Miller's Conflict Model. They also introduced Seligman's Model of Learned Helplessness. Through these clinical models, they raised this question: How do you find Identity in the midst of depression and stress?

The climate of materialism was examined by many students. They followed Rollo May in that they described a society devoid of love. In a society of materialism, love for others, *philia*, and altruistic love, *agape*, were gone. With emphasis on material possessions, the "horrible shoulds" of Horney captured the individual. I need this. I want that. I should have this.

An examination of McWorld corporations, Hollywood and videology showed that these postmodern organizational phenomena experienced no negative consequences. Their impact created rewards and positive reinforcement without any real negative feedback or consequences. The tentacles of McWorld reach everywhere and the outcome is profit.

Other students built upon the pervasiveness of McWorld and portrayed the individual as a person without positive attributions. The individual had few choices and without a positive self-concept lacked directionality and goals. Jihad became a viable choice in that the individuals had the ability to bury themselves in the values and climate of *Gemeinschaft*. There is safety in the historical past.

Finally, some students made observations about the need to problems solve Jihad vs. McWorld. They drew on Kohlberg's moral values and May's need for real community through

altruistic love. These value forces had the ability to counteract materialism and consumerism.

Organizational/Industrial Psychology

The Organizational/Industrial Psychology course emphasized materials related to the global economy and stratification patterns within the United States and throughout the planet. Models were introduced that facilitated these comparisons.

Within the United States, the discussion focused on capital. Wealth and earnings were examined along, with Federal Deficits, budget deficits and Trade Deficits. The knowledge-based society was explored in conjunction with intellectual capital. Finally, social capital was investigated with an emphasis on the new creative class that received services from the working class and service class.

Some students concentrated on global growth with strong emphasis on the United States, Japan, China, and India. They pointed out that China and India had enormous talent pools with very serious amounts of intellectual capital. In a global economy, these intelligent individuals came with a relatively cheap price tag. Within this climate, the McWorld corporations were committed to the bottom line and the highest quality and productivity for the cheapest price.

These students also reflected on the exponential growth of automobiles in China. With the use of fossil fuels and the proliferation of pollutants in China's water system, can the planet survive the production of CO₂? This question was also applied to the United States. These questions definitely reflected Jared Diamond (2005) and Clyde Prestowitz (2005). They ended on a note of hope from Barber (1995).

"The world's nations, have exhausted their natural bounty one by one, may still find a way to survive on the wings of artifice, but they will do so interdependently and together: globally or not at all. The nation-state's days are numbered."

Other students developed concepts concerning science and technology. These areas like all knowledge were bound by no boundaries or limitations. The Indian Physician analyzed medical data for a Bon hospital, while the United State physicians slept. The Indian computer analysis ran data for Microsoft at 2 a.m. and the Microsoft experts downloaded the data at 7:30 a.m. These examples highlighted Lind's (1995) concept of the Brazilianization of the United States. An individual can live in a 1st world country and be a 3rd world person in that they lacked the knowledge to participate in science and technology. .

Another student saw McWorld and globalization from a more positive perspective. The development of a knowledge based society in China and India indicated that these countries had serious levels of intellectual capital. The growth in intellectual capital gave these countries an opportunity to play in the flat world, to produce the Lexus and not prune the Olive Tree and to become three billion new capitalists (Friedman 2000 , 20005 and Prestowitz 2005). These new knowledge based problem solvers became 1st world people in a 3rd world country (Lind,1995). These new players had the knowledge and capacity to create a Lexus through the use of 600 robotics, while they participated in the global capitalistic environment. Toyota City in Japan contributed to global capitalism.

Two students narrated the rise and triumph of liberal economics. This spirit has sparked markets throughout the planet and money like knowledge has found no boundaries. This quality of free flow also applied to the media, electronics and the internet. Communications like money had the ability to flow into any market. All these avenues facilitated the spread of liberal economics. In the midst of these striking narratives, these two students graphically described a 25 year decline in social capital. With the emphasis on free and open markets the concern for others and the support systems of societies have declined. The general safety net has slowly become unraveled and in many cases the net has worn thin to the point of gaping holes. Stock market growth has negatively correlated with Social Capital.

A few students described the condition of trade deficits and they paraphrased Thurow (1999) in that 35 percent of imports came from Japan in the 1960s 48 percent from Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong in the 1980s and 50 percent from China in the 1990s. These data triggered responses on an individual level. These students continued to reflect on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Erikson's Identity Mode. They asked these questions: How do you develop identity, when your contribution to society is service and how do you satisfy personally the hierarchy of needs with a minimum wage? Their concepts suggested that the global economy had real benefits for the importer and corporate players but little benefit for the ordinary worker. One student stated, "Globalization has happened in such a rampant form that if you blinked, you would have missed its arrival and take over."

A final paper concentrated on multimedia resources and saw the impact on youth. They exposed the negative impact of Social Learning. From this perspective, young people modeled the self-centered behaviors of celebrities. The clothes, life style and attitudes imaged the "the star power" presented by MTV and Hollywood and these values reinforced materialism and consumerism.

CONCLUSION

The various students display an ability to integrate Jihad vs. McWorld with course content. They also show a keen capacity to think critically and evaluate materials with solid judgments. The students' ideas make this paper an innovative project.

Do Revisions Help Student Learning?

Brandi Scruggs & Emily Soltano

Worcester State College

College faculty universally struggle to develop effective teaching techniques to encourage retention of course material and necessary self-assessment skills for students. Testing and writing are typical tools used to assess students' learning, but they do not always encourage retention or self-assessment.

For example, various testing formats are used at the college level, including objective multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and subjective short answer and essay questions. However, examinations do not always motivate students to retain course material, particularly after the exam is completed. Some techniques that have been used to increase test performance and subsequent retention include student participation in developing exam questions (Brink, Capps, & Sutko, 2004), commenting on multiple choice questions (Neild & Wintre, 1986), immediate feedback on test questions (DiBattista, Mitterer, & Gosse, 2004), and manipulating frequency of testing (Grover, Becker, & Davis, 1989). Still others use more creative methods for learning such as requiring students to create games from class content (Berrenberg & Prosser, 1991).

Some instructors in the Worcester State College Psychology Department have recently begun to use a test revision assignment designed to improve student retention of course material after taking an exam. Following the administration of an exam, students are given the opportunity to correct their errors by writing a short paragraph explaining why the correct choice is correct. If they feel that their answer was correct, even though it was marked wrong, they also have the opportunity to explain why. In our literature review, no references discussed this pedagogical technique, and we wanted to assess students' perceptions of the assignment using a descriptive study design. We hypothesized that: 1. Students would rate the exam revision assignments as useful to them; 2. Students would rate the assignments as useful for improving their understanding of course material; and 3. Students would rate the assignments as useful for decreasing their nervousness about the exams. We also hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between student ratings and student grades on the assignment.

Participants were 72 students enrolled in PS280 -- Sensation & Perception and PS110 -- General Psychology courses that Dr. Brandi Scruggs (BJS) and Dr. Emily Soltano (EGS) taught.

In these courses we regularly use the test revision assignments. The assignments were offered to all students, regardless of whether they volunteered to participate in this study.

In order to evaluate students' perception of the effectiveness of the exam correction assignment a survey was created by BJS and EGS. The first three questions asked students to indicate the degree to which they perceived the assignment to (a) be useful, (b) improve their understanding, and (c) decrease their anxiety about the exam process. The next question asked for the students' report of their grades before and after the test correction. The last question requested a grade point average (GPA) estimate.

Data collection to determine students' perception of the efficacy of the exam correction assignment involved students in four separate courses (PS110 & PS280). After the exam correction assignment was given in our classes, the students were given a brief verbal description of the study. They were then allowed one class period to decide whether they wished to participate in the study. We stressed that participation was voluntary and that their participation or non-participation would in no way impact their grade in the course.

On the appropriate day, the survey was distributed by the opposite instructor to participating students. EGS administered the survey in BJS's classes; BJS administered the survey in EGS's classes. Students returned the survey in a sealed envelope provided to them with the survey materials. All procedures required approximately 10-15 minutes. Completed surveys were kept by the opposite investigator (e.g., not the course instructor) until the course instructor had completed the final grades for the course.

Data analysis included descriptive statistical analysis of student responses to the Likert scale (1-5) survey questions such as mean, standard deviation, and relevant percentages. We also performed correlational analysis of student responses to individual survey questions.

Results indicated that students rated the exam correction assignment as useful to them ($M=4.68$, $SD=.65$), as improving their understanding of course material ($M=4.47$, $SD=.71$), and as decreasing their nervousness about the exam process ($M=3.97$, $SD=1.13$). There was not a

significant difference on ratings between Sensation & Perception and General Psychology I courses for the question about usefulness or the question about improving understanding. However, there was a significant difference between courses for the question about the exam correction assignment decreasing their nervousness about the exam process. The Sensation & Perception students rated the question about the assignment decreasing their nervousness higher ($M=4.19$, $SD=1.07$) than the General Psychology I students ($M=3.67$, $SD=1.16$), $t(70) = 1.99$, $p < .05$.

No significant correlation was found between grades on the exam (before or after the assignment) and ratings on any of the questions. Weak positive correlations were found between estimated GPA and ratings on the question about perceived usefulness ($r(70) = .235$, $p < .05$), and between estimated GPA and ratings on the question about improved understanding ($r(70) = .259$, $p < .05$). A moderate correlation was found between GPA and grade after the assignment ($r(70) = .623$, $p < .05$).

Lastly, there was a significant difference between grade on the exam before the correction assignment and grade on the exam after the correction assignment for Sensation & Perception ($M_{Original}=70.60$, $SD_{Original}=11.97$; $M_{After}=84.42$, $SD_{After}=6.72$; Increase in points = 13.82), $t(43) 15.78$, $p < .001$, and for General Psychology I ($M_{Original}=65.58$, $SD_{Original}=9.97$; $M_{After}=76.82$, $SD_{After}=8.56$; Increase in points = 11.24), $t(37) 13.20$, $p < .001$).

The results of this study suggest that students' revisions may help their learning. In this case, students were given the opportunity to revise the answers to multiple choice exams. The results showed that this technique reduced student anxiety about exams and increased their perceived understanding of course material. This technique allowed students additional time to master the material resulting in higher grades. Students may also feel greater control over the grade they earned in the course.

From the professor's viewpoint there are some disadvantages to this type of assignment that must be considered. First, there is an increased amount of grading for the instructor. Grading this assignment is similar in many ways to grading essay exams. Students potentially could write as many essays as there are multiple choice exam questions. Second, professors may not want to use a multiple choice test question once it has been made public outside of the testing

classroom. Third, it is possible that this assignment may be viewed as grade inflation. We don't believe it is. Grades did increase for most students but the increase did not create a non-normal distribution. Student exam grades still reflected a normal distribution with some students scoring in the D and F range, most students scoring in the C or B range, and few students scoring in the A range. In addition, because we emphasize mastery of information, we encourage our students to aim for As and Bs and this technique may promote that type of learning. Finally, we believe that this type of test-revision assignment promotes equality among student learning styles. Students who are not skilled test takers are given an additional opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. Again, it is a technique that encourages all students to master information.

Like many successful teaching strategies, this technique involves repetition of course material. Elaborate rehearsal and more effective encoding of difficult material improve learning.

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SITCOMS: TRASH OR TREASURE?

Using Situation Comedies to Enhance Learning

Dean M. Amadio, Ph.D. & Supriya Poonati

Siena College

Most of the examples below may be obtained for purchase at any store selling DVDs. Many libraries also rent these DVDs. Another option is to search websites such as youtube.com or set your DVD/VCR/TIVO recorder when these episodes appear on television.

Research Methods:

Operational Definitions:

Seinfeld, Season 3, “The Library” – Example of why it’s important to operationalize variables such as “aggression”. The characters in the clip discuss gender differences in various types of aggressive acts. Students often recognize the connection to the recent movie *Mean Girls*, which is based on the 2002 book *Queen Bees and Wannabes*. This Seinfeld episode is from 1991, several years before our culture was discussing this particular issue. **See also Human Development/Gender Differences.

Correlation Vs. Causation:

South Park, Season 3, “Spontaneous Combustion” – Example of why it is important to not automatically infer causation from two variables that may be just correlated. In the episode, there seems to be a connection between having a new boyfriend or girlfriend (variable A) and spontaneously combusting (variable B). The town could recommend that no one pursue new romantic relationships to avoid combusting. Luckily, they discover the phenomenon (variable B) is likely caused by the tendency to not expel gas to shield oneself from embarrassment in these

new relationships (variable C). The solution is, of course, obvious and demonstrated in typical South Park fashion.

Learning:

Operant Conditioning:

The Simpsons, Season Two, “Brush With Greatness” – Example of negative and positive reinforcement. When Lisa and Bart want to go to Mt. Splashmore they relentlessly nag Homer until he gives in. Good example of how a parent can inadvertently positively reinforce unwanted behavior when temporarily ridding themselves of an aversive stimulus (negative reinforcement).

Friends, Season 3, “The One With the Giant Poking Device”- Example of negative reinforcement. Phoebe explains that she takes good care of her teeth because every time she visits the dentist someone she knows dies. Unlike many people who brush and floss regularly to avoid painful experiences at the dentist, Phoebe takes good care of her teeth in order to avoid the death of friends (negative reinforcement).

Human Development:

Gender Differences:

*See Seinfeld, Season 3, “The Library” example under Research Methods/Operational Definitions.

Piaget’s Cognitive Development:

The Simpsons, Season 9, “Bart Star” - Example of Homer displaying a trait typically

associated with young children – egocentrism. Homer pretends to quit his job in front of his family while on the phone with his boss and winks into the phone to show his boss he’s only kidding.

Personality:

Psychoanalytic/Defense Mechanisms:

Will and Grace, Season Four, “Jingle Balls” - Example of projection. Will accuses Grace of having a problem with his dancer boyfriend when it’s clear Will, and not Grace, is the one with the problem. At one point Grace calls him “Hector Projector.”

MadTV, Season Ten, Episode 10.10 - Example of rationalization. In a parody of the People’s Court, the plaintiff complains the defendant purposely blew leaves in her yard. When it is revealed that the plaintiff called social services on the defendant and lied about the defendant abusing her children (resulting in their removal from her home) the plaintiff tries to rationalize her behavior (e.g., “But there were a lot of leaves”). This clip is not currently on DVD but you can find it at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1C31HXDnwj0> If it disappears off the website your best bet would be to catch a re-run on Comedy Central.

Sex and the City, Season 4, “Time and Punishment” - Two back to back scenes with numerous examples of defense mechanisms such as regression, projection, reaction formation, denial, etc. This clip is good to show once the students have somewhat of a grasp on defense mechanisms since there are many displayed at one time. It’s also important to give students the relevant back stories: Charlotte has earlier told her friends she is quitting her job after her husband suggests she does so and Aidan, in a previous season, ended his relationship with Carrie after she cheated on him (Carrie is also has been attempting to quit smoking).

Saturday Night Live, “Best of the Classic Years 1975-1980, Volume 2” –
Example of displacement. In a parody of the book Mommie Dearest, Christina Crawford, played

by Gilda Radner, takes her anger out on her doll rather than her mother.

Psychoanalytic/Psychosexual Stages:

Saturday Night Live, “The Best of Phil Hartman” – Example of anal retentiveness. Phil Hartman plays the Anal Retentive Chef, a chef so anal that his garbage pail is probably cleaner than our kitchen countertops.

Frasier, Season Seven, “Mamma Mia” – Example of the Oedipus Complex and transference. Frasier’s is oblivious to the fact that his new girlfriend looks and acts exactly like his deceased mother.

Psychoanalytic/Freudian Slips:

Friends, Season 4, “The One With Ross’s Wedding” – Example of a Freudian slip. This is probably the most known example of a Freudian slip in our culture. Ross mistakenly says the wrong woman’s name, Rachel, at the altar. Most students report that Ross was not aware of his feelings for Rachel when he made this slip, making it truly a Freudian slip and not a conscious feeling blurted out due to inattention.

Karen Horney/Womb Envy:

Roseanne, Season Six, “Don’t Make Room for Daddy” – Example of womb envy. Mark is given advice to invoke the concept of womb envy with his wife to garner sympathy after she is angered by his behavior.

Psychological Disorders & Treatment:

General/Stigma:

Roseanne, Season Six, “Lies My Father Told Me” – Example of how families deal with mental illness.

Treatment Approaches:

Sex and the City, Season Two, “Games People Play” - Example of why people seek counseling as well as psychoanalytic/psychodynamic conceptualization of relationship problems. Carrie’s friends suggest she seek therapy since she is obsessing about her ex-boyfriend. The therapist suggests Carrie chooses the wrong men, rather than vice versa. Carrie is incredulous until, at the end of the episode, she comes to realize she has again repeated her pattern.

Friends, Season Five, “The One With Joey’s Big Break” – Example of free association outside of therapy. Phoebe does not remember the source of her anger towards Ross until Ross attempts a technique with her not unlike free association.

Sex and the City, Season Six, “The Catch” – Examples of cognitive therapy techniques outside of therapy. When Charlotte’s wedding ceremony goes awry, Carrie tries to comfort her by using some techniques remarkably similar to that of a cognitive therapist.

Social Psychology

Implicit Norms/Proxemics:

Seinfeld, Season Five, “The Raincoats Part 1” – Example of the implicit norm of conversational distance. Elaine’s new boyfriend, nicknamed “Close Talker”, breaks the implicit norm of conversational distance with humorous results.

Stereotypes:

Family Guy, Season One, “Wish Upon a Weinstein” – Example of stereotypes. Several scenes demonstrate Peter’s embarrassing stereotypes about Jewish people.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

There are many sitcoms available on DVD that can be used to demonstrate a number of psychological concepts or stimulate discussion on various psychological topics:

Frasier: Both Frasier and Niles are psychiatrists and their alignment with psychoanalytic theory is pervasive throughout many episodes of the show – as is their neuroticism!

I Love Lucy: This show could be used to demonstrate gender roles, positive/negative reinforcement (does Ricky ever actually give into Lucy’s nagging and let her in one of his shows?), and possibly implicit norms (e.g., do you believe the writers/network executives had to discuss not showing a married couple sleeping in the same bed?).

All in the Family: Plenty of episodes deal with stereotypes and prejudice.

Brady Bunch: This show is all about moral dilemmas, so many episodes might be useful as an adjunct to discussing this topic. It might also be useful to discuss implicit norms (e.g., do you believe the writers/network executives had to discuss not showing a toilet in the bathroom?).

Seinfeld: Numerous episodes deal with implicit norms regarding mundane, everyday behaviors.

Student Excuses & Motivation

Grant Leitma, Ph.D.

Columbia Union College

Introduction

Since I have been teaching psychology for 25 years at Columbia Union College, it still surprises me at the kinds of excuses students offer for their missed exams, late submissions, or class lecture absences. I have found it intriguing to collect and organize what students have said about their personal reasons for failing adhere to established guidelines for assignments, tests, projects, and classroom attendance as stated in the syllabus.

Students are paying significant amount of money for tuition and as a result we expect them to being fully engaged as students. Since we believe that the “face to face” encounters in the classroom is important for learning the material, we must make sure that students are coming to class. Various motivational approaches will be explored that may help to encourage students to fulfill their obligations with us.

Excuses used by students may reveal hidden motivational factors and problems that seem to work against a student becoming an efficient learner.

The following are ten broad area of excuses used by students to rationalize their behavior at Columbia Union College collected over a 24 year period from 1982-2006.

EXCUSE CATEGORIES

1. Time
2. Health
3. Family Emergencies
4. Car Problems

5. Traffic
6. Equipment Failures
7. Lifestyle Issues
8. Weather Problems
9. Court Appearances
10. Transportation Needs

TIME

No time to study

Not prepared

Up all night with a troubled roommate

Locked out by roommate

Mom/father /boyfriend/girlfriend called

“I didn't know which day of the week the class meets”

Over slept....even with a 11:15 class

Alarm didn't go off in time/did not hear the alarm

Was too embarrassed to come in late for the quiz

Late to class:

“Did we do anything important today?”

Anticipation:

“Are we going to do anything important today?”

“I thought the class was finished after midterm”

Forgot the assignment was due

I was taking another test

Busy studying and forgot about class

I waited for you from 9 to 9:20am and left the classroom (class starts at 9:30!)

HEALTH

Sick and unable to get assignment

Sick and unable to take the test

Headache/feverish/cold/sore throat/hoarse

Stomachache

Injured playing basketball/hockey/football/gymnastics etc.

Time of the month

Fatigue/tired: need to rest

Stressed out/burned out

I need to sleep more: Dr's. requirement

Test anxiety/Your class is the only one I'm failing in

Food poisoned at Wendy's

Arthritic hand: can not write the exam

FAMILY EMERGENCY

Brother/sister problem

Cousin is suicidal

Parental illness

Return to baby sit siblings

Grandparent died

Grandparent died again???

Friend died

Friend of a friend died

Aunt/uncle died

Purchase property in Florida

House burned down; Home was burglarized

CAR PROBLEMS

Battery failure

Engine failure

Flat tire

Car stolen

Car stolen with project

Window fogs while driving

Car pool driver was sick

Car accident

TRAFFIC

Accident on the Beltway/New Hampshire Ave.

I-270 Accident

Traffic congestion/Stuck in traffic

“I called but you were not in”

EQUIPMENT FAILURES

PC broke down

Printer will not print

PC Virus

E-mail doesn't work

“Ink cartridge out of ink”

“The computer lab is closed so I couldn't print it”

LIFE STYLE ISSUES

Work requirements: called into work/worked late/work early/flood in basement

Music/Athletic trips

Relationship breakdown/romantic problems

Fight with boyfriend/girlfriend/emotionally upset

Fight with parent/ not in the mood for class

Getting married

Getting divorced

Wedding rehearsal

Internship/job interview appointment

“I took this test because I had to. I can not read nor see without my glasses.”

WEATHER

Slippery roads/icy roads/heavy rain/ too much fog

Live too far away: mom won't let me leave home

“I don't do ice”

Court ordered summons

Arrested

Speeding

HOV offender: “I'm from Canada”

“My brother is getting out of prison today”

TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

Leaving early

Airport Pickup/drop-off relative

Airport Pickup/drop-off friend

Lost baggage at the airport

Father bought me an airline ticket

“I'm leaving the country”

I missed the bus

MOTIVATION

We want to make sure we do not provide the student with the motivation to use excuses in our classrooms. Here are some quick points to remember to use to excite interest in your classroom:

- A. Show passion and enthusiasm
- B. Lecture to their interest
- C. Personal examples
- D. In-class exercises: extrinsic/intrinsic motivation
- E. Interactive format
- F. Vary teaching techniques
- G. Tests reflect class and textbook content
- H. One main goal/theme for the course
- I. I use Teacherweb.com to communicate with students about grades and announcements for paper deadlines.

You can improve a student's motivation for your class by adhering to classroom expectations found in your syllabus. Assignments submitted late are reduced by 10% of their value. Exams taken late are allowed with appropriate documentation from the student. In-class assignments are used to increase the student's motivation not to miss class. I use a variety of methods here. In-class assignments range in variety from 2 min. reaction papers, videotape assignments, self-report inventories, reading assignment quizzes, and providing their own definitions for concepts to be used in class.

Conclusion

If one of the goals of a college education is to prepare the student for the world of work, it makes sense to teach them to be responsible and professional persons. However, some students are slow to understand the necessity of commitment and being conscientious about their educational studies. Consequently, students have offered various excuses for not coming to class on time, failing to appear for an exam, or submitting an assignment late. The college experience should enhance the transferability of student's skills for employment. College for many students should be a place for such a preparation. Young adult college students reflect various degrees of maturity as they begin to handle the stress of class work, assignments, exams, projects and other life commitments. However, students reflect various levels of motivation to accomplish these tasks. As psychology professors, we should know how to increase the motivational levels of students to accomplish college tasks assigned to them. The ten broad areas of student excuses suggests that we need to be aware of how to minimize a student's use of excuses and help them to concentrate on their studies and fulfill class assignments.

Horney Goes Hollywood: Using Films to Teach Personality Theory

Dante Mancini, Ph.D. and Herman Huber, Ph.D.

College of Saint Elizabeth, Morristown, NJ 07960

While personality theories are inherently fascinating, introducing the material to undergraduates in an accessible, engrossing way can be a daunting task. Using effective supplementary materials is essential to promote and maintain student enthusiasm and understanding, and while some highly instructive ancillaries are available, surprisingly few authors have addressed the use of feature films to illustrate key concepts in personality theory. These can be an excellent medium through which to teach personality theory, particularly films containing characters that can be clearly viewed from multiple theoretical perspectives and bring human complexities to life.

This roundtable discussion will present ten carefully selected and widely available films—both classic and current—featuring characters that exemplify specific concepts in psychoanalytic, humanistic, social-cognitive, behavioral, and trait theories that students can easily and effectively identify and examine. Participants will be presented with several film clip examples and a thorough list of theoretical concepts illustrated in each film. Furthermore, participants will be provided with instructions for a comprehensive writing assignment designed to encourage students' critical thinking and application skills. For example, according to Freud, is Miles Raymond (Paul Giamatti) in Sideways (2004) fixated at the oral or phallic stage? At what point in the film does Miles begin to experience congruence, according to Rogers? In what areas of his life does Miles experience high and low self-efficacy, according to Bandura? Participants will also have an opportunity to discuss their own practices in the use of films to teach personality theory. This particular approach has worked extremely well for the past three years, and has significantly increased student participation, understanding, and enthusiasm.

Testing Elaboration Learning in Varied Contexts

Robert A. Dushay, Ph.D.

Department of Social Science, Morrisville State College

Introduction

It is a common perception among college faculty that students do not appear to study as much as they should, and their comprehension of course material, as measured by performance on exams, is not as high as it could or should be. I have spent some years working on ways to improve student retention of material presented in my Introduction to Psychology courses taught at Morrisville State College, and I've confirmed that students do not spend enough time studying (TOP 17 presentation) and they don't use the best study techniques available to them (TOP 18 presentation). Attempts to reinforce more studying or to tell students about better study techniques to improve their retention have not improved student grades to any real degree (TOP 18 presentation).

However, when students use elaboration learning, retention increases. Elaboration learning involves students thinking *about* the material, connecting it to ideas they already know, instead of reviewing it over and over. Elaboration learning is an example of deep processing, a learning technique shown in the laboratory to improve retention of material (Craik & Lockhart, 1972; Craik & Tulving, 1975). One way I've utilized this concept is with a "mini paper," where students handed in brief written assignments, defined a concept in their own words and provided and explained their own examples of the phenomenon. Students scored better on final exam questions related to concepts they'd written mini papers for (TOP 19 presentation).

While the mini paper technique was successful, it's difficult to extend across all of the concepts in the course. It would be far better to teach students to use elaboration learning as their studying technique and gain the benefit from it. Informal, one-on-one attempts to teach this to students did not shown much of an effect (TOP 18 presentation). Fortunately, I have had the opportunity to use classroom time to teach the concept directly. This was the topic of my paper presented at TOP 20.

For the past three years, I've taught one section of Practical Study Skills (Gned 102) linked to one section of Introduction to Psychology. The first time I taught this course, in the fall 2004 semester, I introduced elaboration learning didactically, lecturing students about it in the context of the unit on cognitive psychology. I explained the theory behind the technique, explained how to do it, showed students that their mini paper grades had proven the effectiveness of the technique, and waited for student grades to improve. They never did: students in the study skills group had mean test scores about seven points below students in regular sections for the entire semester.

In the fall 2005 semester, I taught the elaboration learning technique as a skill to be acquired, and found the results to be satisfactory. I waited until after the first exam, so that students could see that they needed to take action to improve their grades. Students were assigned to study groups of three or four students, and these groups assembled in class for an hour a week to go over the previous week's material. Groups were balanced so that there was one student who had done relatively well on the first test, one who had done relatively poorly, and one in the middle. Key concepts from the previous week's material were split up and assigned to individual members of the study group. Each member was responsible for understanding their own assigned concepts, and when the groups met, members taught the rest of the group their prepared concepts. Members were taught how to use a Socratic technique for teaching their material: rather than lecturing the group on what they'd learned, the "teacher" member would ask questions and provide feedback to their partners, so that everybody contributed to the discussion. To help build group cohesion, and to provide for additional group pressure on the lower performing students, I offered an incentive: group members would all receive extra credit on their exam scores, based on the performance of the two lowest scoring members of the group. (The actual formula was five percent of the mean exam scores for the lowest scoring members of the group.)

For the first three sessions, I served as a supervisor in these groups, correcting techniques and making sure everybody participated. As the semester went along, I gave the students more autonomy in their groups.

The results were very encouraging: compared to their peers in regular sections of Introduction to Psychology, study skills students did far worse on the first test (mean test score fourteen points lower), but showed a dramatic improvement of seventeen points on the second test, obtaining a mean score seven points higher than students in the comparison sections. Study skills students stayed within three points of their peers for the next two exams. This equivalence did not last, though. For the last unit test of the semester and for the final exam, study skills students scored five points lower than their peers.

A change in the method is a likely explanation for the drop in grades. After the fourth test, students were required to meet with their study groups outside of class. Students were required to hand in assignments about their study groups to provide me with feedback. The feedback showed that students did not meet with their groups outside of the class, so the drop in performance is likely to be explained by student failures to “stick with the program.” The administration of the study groups and the results from them were described in detail in my paper presented at TOP 20.

The First Replication

In the spring 2006 semester, a number of students approached me after their second test in Intro Psych. Scores on test two were extremely poor, and some students were worried enough to ask for help. In the past, I’ve invited students to either come to my office hours, meet with me on a regular weekly basis, or I’ve held extra evening review sessions, but most of these approaches have not shown results commensurate with the extra effort. This time, I believed I had something that could actually help these students, but I was dubious if they would work without the carrot and stick of graded assignments from the Practical Study Skills course. (I did not offer the Gned 102 course in the spring semester.) I doubted that the technique would be as effective, but I felt it was my best chance for helping students improve their grades.

I scheduled two review sessions a week for one month. Students were welcome to choose either session, but once they chose, they were expected to attend that review session every week. Study groups were assigned, and the procedure used the previous semester was followed as closely as possible: material was distributed among group members, extra credit was to be

awarded according to the performance of the lowest scoring group members, members were trained to use Socratic teaching methods inside their group, and I gradually reduced my involvement in the groups. The results on test three were astonishing. Given student reluctance to use the technique on their own time the previous semester, I did not have high expectations about results when students were using the study technique as an extra assignment outside of class. Yet on test 3, students increased their mean test performance by a whopping *twenty-five points*. The students were congratulated, and told to continue the studying on their own; the professor's presence was no longer needed, as clearly they had mastered the technique.

Test four belied that claim, with a drop of roughly twenty points for test mean of the study skills students. After seeing their poor performance, I asked study skills group members what had happened. They admitted they had not sustained the study groups, and had gone back to their old study habits. They requested more review sessions in the evening. When I protested that I was no longer needed, and in fact, would no longer participate, the students insisted that unless I was there, they would feel no pressure to use the study group technique, even with the extra credit points. From test four until test five, study sessions were held once more, one night a week, and study group student performance once more showed a substantial increase. There were no study groups for the final exam, and test performance dropped once more.

The data confirm that elaboration study groups give students a meaningful improvement in grades, even outside of the context of a study skills class. Unfortunately, the data also indicate that the study groups may not function without the “stick” of a professor personally meeting with the review sessions in order to keep them functioning. According to study group members' self report, the professor's presence was needed to provide sufficient incentive for students to show up.

The Second Replication

The third and final iteration of the Practical Study Skills course was in the fall 2006 semester. The course was planned to go the same way as in 2005, except I wanted to focus on getting students to utilize the study technique on their own, outside of the classroom. I did not follow my plan because I introduce the elaboration study groups after students do poorly on an

exam, so that they are motivated to put in the extra effort to improve their grades. But unlike previous years, the study skills student grades were indistinguishable from regular Intro Psych grades for tests one, two, and three. After test three, I introduced the elaboration study groups anyway, because unless I taught it to the students, the Practical Study Skills course would have been useless. Scores on test four improved from a mean of 65% correct to a mean of 82%, substantially higher than the comparison sections, which had a mean score of 72% on test four.

Given that the elaboration study groups were formed so late in the semester, students were never asked to do them on their own time: class time was used for the study groups up to test five. In spite of this, student grades dropped to pre-study levels for test five—*even though this was done on class time, with the professor's direct supervision!* While this result was very discouraging, the likely cause was easily uncovered. Since the study groups were part of the study skills course, and students were graded on their effort, there were records on student preparation for and participation in the study groups. As noted above, students were expected to prepare a subset of course concepts to teach to members of their group. To ensure that this preparation work was done, students were required to hand in their personal definitions for their assigned concepts at the beginning of class. Students were also required at the end of class to hand in their personal definitions for all of the concepts their study groups had covered during that session. These cards were graded, and were used as part of the course grade for the study skills portion of the course.

It was possible to easily see which students were putting in the effort for their study groups and which weren't. A significant subset of students failed to prepare for their study groups, and a surprising number handed in definitions at the end of class that had either been plagiarized from other group members, or had simply been copied from the "teacher"'s definition. Both of these forms of copying had been specifically forbidden, and students knew it. When student data were segregated according to who prepared and did the work and who didn't, the results were encouraging: students who did the work maintained their advantage, getting a mean score of 66% on test five. Students who did not saw substantial drops in their grades, to 54%. (Comparison group students had a mean score of 62%.)

I am reasonably confident that these results were more from effort than ability. It is possible,

but unlikely, that these non-performing students had more difficulty with the concepts in test 5 (social psychology) than in test 4 (cognitive psychology), but I doubt that this difference was more important than the fact that they did not seem to have done the elaborative thinking that the technique was designed to elicit.

The Third Replication

The evidence is good that the elaboration study groups technique works, and should improve the grades of most students. In the spring 2007 semester, I began a quasi-experimental study to attempt to find whether the success of the elaboration study group technique is due to the technique itself, or if it comes from spending more time on the material, with the professor correcting misunderstandings. To test this idea, I began running regular review sessions twice a week. On Thursday nights, I ran a standard review session for Introduction to Psychology students. We did not use elaboration study groups: students asked questions, and I answered them, for one fifty-minute period once a week. When this paper was presented, we had met twice, and the first test since the study groups began was administered after this paper was presented. Students in this study group got one point of extra credit for each review session they attended, and attendance was voluntary. To this point, the review sessions were well-attended, but results are unlikely to be meaningful for the first test, as the second session's questions were primarily about grades, rather than material. This condition provided students with extra time with the material and more time with the professor without the elaboration study group skills.

On Tuesday nights, I ran regular review sessions for a different course, where I taught the students the elaboration study group method. The students are from two sections of a Microeconomics course, which I have no background in. My role in these review sessions was only to show students how to use the elaboration study group technique, and I did not (and could not) provide any course content. Study concepts were provided by that course's professor, and I assigned these to group members. As of this report, the study groups met three times. The first time, a week after their second quiz, the six students who showed up were introduced to what the study groups were all about, how the technique was supposed to work, and why I believed it would be successful. For the second meeting, three of the original members did not return, and

four new members arrived, leaving a final population of seven students, half of which were unprepared. Students worked in one big review group, and the three students who had prepared material from the previous week taught their concepts to the rest of the group, as I coached them in the Socratic technique. At times, I interrupted the group to ask further questions, extended the examples to new situations, and demonstrated how to draw in quiet students who were uninvolved. At the end of this session, the seven students were assigned to two study groups, three students in the first group, four in the second.

For the third session, students were allowed more autonomy. I spent a lot of time with the three-student group, as one member appeared to dominate the conversation and needed to be shifted into a more Socratic mode. At the end of the session, students were given concepts to prepare for the next review session, but their third quiz would occur before we met again.

Students took their third quiz just before this conference. One member of the second study group did not take his quiz due to excessive snow preventing his coming to campus. While mean scores for the study group students improved by seven points from quiz two to quiz three, this was comparable to the eight point improvement for the same group from quiz one to quiz two, before the study groups were implemented. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that the elaboration study process improved student performance on quiz three as a whole.

Not all of the material on quiz 3 was covered by the study groups. I classified the quiz questions into four groups: material covered by the study groups (Covered), concepts that were not directly covered by the study groups, but were implied by the material that was covered (Implied); material that should have been covered by the study groups, but was skipped (Skipped), and material that was not covered by the study groups (Not covered). Notice that the material covered depended on whether a student had made it to the first session (and thus, prepared for the second): for those who had, there were nine questions in the Covered subscale, while for those who had not, there were only four questions in that category. (The remaining five questions for those students were put aside in a fifth category, and it is not presented.) This makes comparison with the regular, non-study groups students awkward, as their “covered” category might have nine or four questions.

Nevertheless, there was virtually no difference in test scores between study skills students

and regular students, except for the skipped material, where study skills students scored substantially *lower* than their non-study group peers (58% vs. 69% for the comparison group).

It is possible that the economics students who self-selected to join the elaboration study groups were having more difficulty comprehending the material than their peers. In order to obtain the best possible comparison, I took a subsample of students who had scored less than seventy percent correct on the first quiz. The subsample included five out of the six study group students, and fifteen students from the rest of the class. The results were comparable to those presented above but there was a slight advantage for the study group students, even with their highest-scoring member removed from the data. Oddly, the questions where the study group students showed the most superiority over their low-scoring peers was in the material that was *not covered* in the study groups at all (80% correct for study group students, vs. 68% for low-scoring peers).

Conclusion

I find the results from the last replication surprising and disappointing. As noted above, the main effect of the elaboration study groups was apparently to reduce student performance on the material that was skipped. My best explanation for this result is that students may have assumed that if it wasn't covered in the study group, they didn't need to study it for the exam. The non-study group students showed a comparable drop—clearly these questions were more difficult for all of the students.

The elaboration study group has not yet been fully tested in this economics course, and it is possible with better coordination between the economics professor and myself, the study groups will show more promise. It is quite puzzling how a technique with strong promise in psychology has shown so little promise in a different field.

The most obvious conclusion may be correct, and the students are right: the professor does make a difference. It may not be enough to teach the technique without any content. While such a conclusion would be reassuring for faculty job security, it would contradict a great deal of the philosophy behind academic support services.

This study lacks sufficient clout to show that the elaboration study group technique cannot

work without teaching content: samples are very small and non-representative, and the coordination between the economics professor and myself was not as much as could be hoped for. The skipped material needs to be addressed, and students need to be interviewed to obtain their perspective on those test items.

Had the study succeeded in spite of these obstacles, it would have been strong evidence in favor of the technique. Without that success, the results are very ambiguous. There's a lot more work to be done.

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