

**Farmingdale State College**  
**Teaching of Psychology: Ideas and Innovations**  
**Proceedings of the 26th Annual Conference**  
March 23-24, 2012  
Tarrytown, New York

Drs. Marya Howell-Carter, Jennifer Gonder and Ms. Zahra Mushtaq, Editors  
Submitted August 21, 2012

**FARMINGDALE STATE COLLEGE TEACHING OF PSYCHOLOGY CONFERENCE**  
**2012: CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

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## Introduction

The 26th Annual Conference on the Undergraduate Teaching of Psychology was held on March 23-24, 2012 at the Double Tree Hotel in Tarrytown, New York. The conference was presented by the Psychology Department of the State University of New York at Farmingdale. The theme for this year's conference was: *The value of an undergraduate degree in psychology: Why psychology... Why now?*. The Conference featured a keynote address by Jane Halonen, Ph.D. of the University of West Florida. The talk was entitled: *Can There Be Too Many Psychology Majors?* Andrew Christopher, Ph.D., editor of *Teaching of Psychology* presented an invited address titled, *Getting Published in the Teaching Literature: Wisdom, Sage Advice, and Helpful Hints*. The Conference also featured our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Student Research Poster Session with six undergraduate student poster presentations. Conference participants also had 24 workshops, discussions and oral presentations from which to choose and many colleagues, new and old, with whom to network. Ten of these proposals or presentations are included in the proceedings.

The success of our conference was due to the continuing efforts of many people, particularly the enthusiastic participation of our presenters and attendees. The conference committee was co-chaired by Drs. Marya Howell-Carter and Jennifer Gonder with the support of Drs. Eugene Indenbaum, Judith Levine, Rommel Robertson, Michael Goodstone, and Department Administrative Assistant, Ms. Barbara Sarringer. We would like to recognize the contributions of the National Science Foundation as this material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 0916922. Please note that any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation. We also extend our thanks to the Westchester County Psychological Association for its sponsorship of a student prize, and to Farmingdale State College Student Government/Psychology Club for supporting student attendance at the conference.

Dr. Marya Howell-Carter  
Dr. Jennifer Gonder  
August 2012

## **PROGRAM OF PRESENTATIONS**

**Friday, March 23, 2012**

**8:00AM - 9:00AM REGISTRATION AND CONTINENTAL  
BREAKFAST**

**SESSION 1: 9:00AM-10:00AM**

### **ROOM 1: ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

Sayedul Islam, Farmingdale State College

***Bridging the Gap: Teaching I/O psychology to traditional Psychology Undergraduates***

**ABSTRACT:** Perlman and McCann (1999) reported that more psychology departments are offering I/O psychology courses. In addition recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that I/O psychology is a growing field. Studies conducted by Kirnan, Reilly, and Dekcer (2002) indicated that up to 72% of graduates from an undergraduate I/O psychology program were able to find employment a year after graduation. However teaching I/O psychology courses at the undergraduate level continues to provide new challenges for instructors. Most students in psychology courses do not have a business-oriented perspective. Without this perspective, many of the concepts found in traditional I/O courses may seem foreign to these students. This round table discussion will allow faculty who specialize in teaching I/O courses a forum where they might share information, projects and techniques that they use.

### **ROOM 2: ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

Comila Shahani Denning, Terri Shapiro, Kristin Weingartner, Kelsey DiNardo and Cong Lui, Hofstra University

***The Challenges of Undergraduate Internships: Are they Worth the Effort?***

**ABSTRACT:** In today's competitive job market, undergraduates need to find something extra to help them stand. One solution is to have students participate in internships related to their major. Research has shown that students, who participate in internships graduate with higher GPAs, are more valued by employers, receive higher starting salaries, and are more likely to have a job at graduation. The issues of finding and completing a paid internship versus an unpaid internship are discussed. In a round table discussion we will address the logistics of incorporating undergraduate internships into the Psychology curriculum.

### **ROOM 3: WORKSHOP**

Jeffrey Nevid, St. John's University

***Making Your Classroom Bloom: Integrating Bloom's Taxonomy in Teaching Psychology***

**ABSTRACT:** Bloom's taxonomy, developed by educational researcher Benjamin Bloom in the 1950s, continues to have a major impact on the types of skills we expect our students to acquire and how we evaluate whether they achieve these learning goals. This presentation discusses how psychology instructors can make their classes "bloom" by incorporating specific pedagogical approaches tied to Bloom's taxonomy and using active verbs as learning outcomes to measure the

skills students acquire. Examples of classroom-based applications of Bloom's taxonomy will be discussed and a course evaluation model for connecting APA learning goals to Bloom's taxonomy will be presented.

## **SESSION 2: 10:10AM-11:10 AM**

### **ROOM 1: ROUNDTABLE**

Christine Floether, Centenary College

#### ***Making Dying Fun? Teaching End of Life Issues to Emerging Adults***

**ABSTRACT:** Teaching Emerging Adults is a complex, complicated task for many of us. Prior to teaching subject matter, we must first understand the developmental needs and requirements for this group of individuals. They are not quite young adults, but have achieved most of the tasks of adolescence. For them, Old Age is many years away and hence not relevant. At Centenary we chose to make this part of development a separate class due to the need to understand geriatrics and death, dying, and bereavement in a specific, guided, structured manner and one which allows more concentrated effort rather than a few weeks at the end of a course on Human Development. The purpose was to make the subject matter more relevant through assignments and discussion.

### **ROOM 2: ROUNDTABLE**

Benjamin Wood, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

#### ***Analysis of Religion: The Value of a Psychological Approach***

**ABSTRACT:** This roundtable discussion will explore how educators can design courses on the psychology of religion and include topics on religion and spirituality in other psychology courses. A particular focus of the roundtable discussion will be on how educators can encourage psychological inquiry of religious topics in a way that is respectful and sensitive to a multicultural perspective. A course on the psychology of religion offers students the chance to apply their knowledge of psychological theory, research, and practice to topics ranging from conflict resolution among warring religious factions to health benefits of participating in a spiritual practice. The roundtable will offer a space for educators to share specific teaching strategies they have used including particular case studies of religious phenomena, analyzing personal religious or spiritual practices, or assessing research on a particular religious or spiritual topic. Relevant questions to discuss may include how do educators navigate class discussions in which personal beliefs are questioned from certain psychological perspectives? How can psychology navigate the tension between multicultural openness and social justice perspectives on religion? How can we encourage students to see the strengths of using psychological analyses of religion and the limitations? How can educators facilitate class discussions on religion, which are respectful and open?

### **ROOM 3: ROUNDTABLE**

Albert Bramante, Union County College

#### ***Humanistic Education in the Psychology Classroom***

**ABSTRACT:** Humanistic Theory, often referred to as third force Psychology has been popular since the 1960's. This presentation will discuss different aspects of how to implement

humanistic theory into the classroom. Participants will exchange ideas and will be able to come away with new strategies to implement.

**BREAK 11:15- 11:30**

### **SESSION 3: 11:30AM-12:30PM**

#### **ROOM 1: WORKSHOP**

R. Eric Landrum, Boise State University

***Throwing DARTS at Undergraduate Psychology Education: Design, Assessment, Retention, Transfer, and Skills***

**ABSTRACT:** This workshop is designed to (gently) challenge attendees to consider the most current research available on the general effectiveness of the undergraduate psychology curriculum and to reflect about their own pedagogical practices. Systematically, we will examine the following areas: course design, assessment practices, evidence for retention, the transfer of prerequisite knowledge to other course, and skill acquisition and assessment.

#### **ROOM 2: WORKSHOP**

Matthew R. Lee and Amanda L. Campbell, James Madison University

***Increasing Undergraduate Student Awareness and Appreciation of Affirmative Action***

**ABSTRACT:** Myths about the history and policies regarding affirmative action persist among young people (e.g., Plous, 1996, 2003). The proposed workshop will detail an innovative simulation of a college admissions process meant to promote more accurate understanding and awareness of current affirmative action policies for students in a course on psychology and cultural diversity. During the hour, participants will engage in the activity and discuss their reactions to it as well as how they could implement it into specific coursework in psychology. Some data from a quasi-experimental study using this methodology (N = 164) will be presented as well, illustrating the potential positive effect of including such an activity in the curriculum.

#### **ROOM 3: WORKSHOP**

Lysandra Perez-Strumolo, Ramapo College

***Learning Activities and Assessments that Promote Student Development: The Case for Authentic Tasks in Undergraduate Education***

**ABSTRACT:** This session will focus on the development of assessment methods and learning activities that serve multiple purposes: promote student engagement and deep learning; improve validity of assessment methods for demonstrating student growth; developing student motivation and value for learning; and develop life skills that can enhance student preparation for the work force. Participants will learn about the concept of an authentic task and the benefits and challenges involved in integrating authentic activities into their courses. Models to be used in the development of such activities will be described, and samples that highlight this pedagogical technique will be presented.

**LUNCH/KEYNOTE ADDRESS: 12:30PM – 2:00PM**

#### **Keynote Address:**

***Jane Halonen, Ph.D., University of West Florida***

## ***“Can There Be Too Many Psychology Majors?”***

### **SESSION 4: 2:30PM-3:00PM**

#### **ROOM 1: ORAL PRESENTATION**

Mary McVey, San Jose State University

***Going Mobile: Establishing an iPad Initiative to Foster Dynamic Classroom Instruction***

**ABSTRACT:** This presentation reviews our experience with establishing an iPad program. Details of how we set-up a mini-grant program, equipment and app selections, and the various methods used to address technical and pedagogical issues encountered will be covered. Professional development activities and survey data (students and faculty) will also be discussed.

#### **ROOM 2: ORAL PRESENTATION**

Dora D. Clarke-Pine, La Sierra University

***What about the Basic Writing Skills of Students? If Dissertations are a Barometer, then our Whole Educational System Needs Work***

**ABSTRACT:** It is the perception of a number of professors in higher education that students' writing skills have deteriorated over the years. In one writing domain previously researched by this author, a significant amount of plagiarism was identified at the highest educational level possible, the doctoral level, in a random sample of 120 dissertations. How would these same dissertations fare in terms of basic writing style mechanics as well as format-related guidelines? In the examination of these dissertations, these two areas fell woefully short of expectations. These results are examined and discussed in detail as are implications regarding the research.

#### **ROOM 3: ORAL PRESENTATION**

John Mitterer, Brock University

***rSQ4R: Integrating Remembering and Critical Thinking***

**ABSTRACT:** There is usually more to remembering than mere reading. Memory systems like SQ4R give students strategies to deepen processing, resulting in better memory. At the same time, there is more to learning than mere remembering. Concepts like critical thinking give students tools to better grasp fields like psychology. rSQ4R integrates critical thinking tools into SQ4R, resulting in a single easy-to-understand system that fosters reflectiveness as a way to simultaneously enhance both understanding and memory.

### **SESSION 5: 3:10PM-3:40PM**

#### **ROOM 1: ORAL PRESENTATION**

Katherine Zaromatidis and Patricia A. Oswald, Iona College

***Using Introductory Psychology Courses to Measure Institutional Core Curriculum Goals***

**ABSTRACT:** The psychology department at Iona College is in the process of developing student learning outcomes not for attainment of departmental goals, but rather for attainment of the college core curriculum goals. As more and more accrediting bodies have focused on student learning

outcomes, this is becoming standard practice in many psychology departments. Dr. Zaromatidis and Dr. Oswald will discuss challenges faced in this process, such as the creation of operational definitions and the development of course assignments that assess student attainment of these learning outcomes.

### **ROOM 2: ORAL PRESENTATION**

Christina Connor and Nicholas P. Salter, Ramapo College of New Jersey

#### ***Thinking INSIDE the box: Teaching Information Literacy within the Field of Psychology***

**ABSTRACT:** Information literacy is a topic that is essential for all Psychology students to understand. However, due to the nature of the topic, it is not appropriate to teach the same skills to first year students as to seniors. The current presentation will discuss a joint faculty-librarian collaboration to teach discipline-specific information literacy in introductory and advanced Psychology classes. Specifically, the Psychology Information Literacy Standards (adopted by the American Librarian Association) were used. The benefits of the classroom information literacy sessions will be discussed as well as next steps that can be addressed in future sessions.

### **ROOM 3: ORAL PRESENTATION**

Jill S. Haasch, Elizabeth City State University

#### ***The Relationship between Metacognition, Self-Regulated Learning Strategies and Learning Styles***

**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between metacognition, strategies for learning and learning styles. Metacognition is the awareness and monitoring of one's thoughts and task performance, or simply thinking about thinking. Motivated strategies for learning are designed to assess college students' use of learning strategies. Learning styles are different approaches or ways of learning, which includes auditory, kinesthetic and visual learning. Demographic variables, findings from the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (Schraw & Dennison 1994), the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (Pintrich & DeGroot 1990) and Learning Styles Inventory were examined.

## **SESSION 6: 3:50PM-4:20PM**

### **ROOM 1: ORAL PRESENTATION**

Adam Grim and Melanie Wong-Dodge, United States Military Academy (West Point)

#### ***Test Self-correction: Learning or Liability?***

**ABSTRACT:** Teachers at all levels continue to seek better ways to educate their students, promote student ownership of the learning process, and encourage mastery. This appears to be particularly important among undergraduate institutions as educators try advance their students from a teacher-centric adolescent learning model to a student-centric adult learning model. One such approach involving self-correcting exams (Wong-Dodge & Ryan, 2009) has been instituted for the past three semesters in our freshman introductory psychology program. Tentative results from the past year as well as ongoing efforts to more rigorously examine the utility and efficacy of self-correction are examined.



**ROOM 2: ORAL PRESENTATION**

Frederick Tesch, Donna Coelho and Ron Drozdenkno, Western Connecticut State University  
***Style Counts: Exploring Learning Styles and Classroom Distracters***

**ABSTRACT:** Extending our previous research on classroom distracters, this study explored possible relationships among distracters and students' learning styles. Undergraduate and graduate students responded online (a) to rate how distracting they find each of 36 external and 21 self-produced situations and (b) to a modified version of a learning styles questionnaire based on the Felder-Silverman model. Preliminary analyses revealed relationships between several distracters (e.g., instructor perceived as difficult to understand) and learning style items (e.g., visual vs. verbal preferences, preference to work alone vs. in groups). Differences and linkages were also found for graduate vs. undergraduate students and for other demographic factors.

**ROOM 3: ORAL PRESENTATION**

Anne E. Stuart, Sandra Segó, and Robert Khoury, American International College  
***Using Social Influence to Sell Students on the Value of Psychology and the Liberal Arts***

**ABSTRACT:** Psychology, particularly the area of social influence and decision making, provides the framework on which we designed an interdisciplinary course that enriches the career-focused mindset of today's college students with the knowledge, skills, and values consistent with a liberal arts education. Using readings from popular press books (e.g., Freakonomics, Blink, and Tipping Point) in addition to a basic textbook, we cover classic and innovative examples from the core social sciences and related applied fields. The course reinforces the AAC&U and APA learning outcomes that are desired in the business world and are transferable skills utilized in many diverse fields.

**ROOM 4: ORAL PRESENTATION**

Michael J. Brown, SUNY – College at Oneonta  
***Students' Perceptions of Official and Unofficial Evaluations of Teaching***

**ABSTRACT:** This study examines how students perceive official student evaluations of teaching (SETs) and unofficial mid-semester evaluations (MSEs). It also examines whether completing MSEs affects students' perceptions of the course and the instructor. Participants ( $N = 80$ ) believed SETs are valid measures of teaching; however, they had doubts about whether students or instructors take these evaluations seriously. Participants had very positive perceptions of MSEs and instructors who conduct them. Completing a MSE positively affected perceptions of the instructor's responsibility, his commitment to teaching, and his desire for the class to do well. Implications and limitations of these results are discussed.



**Saturday, March 24, 2012**

**8:00 - 9:00 AM REGISTRATION AND CONTINENTAL  
BREAKFAST**

**SESSION 7: 9:00AM-10:00AM: INVITED ADDRESS**

**Andrew Christopher, Editor, Teaching of Psychology (TOP)  
“Getting Published in the Teaching Literature: Wisdom, Sage,  
Advice, and Helpful Hints”**

**SESSION 8: 10:15AM-11:15AM**

**ROOM 1: PANEL DISCUSSION**

Charles LaJeunesse, Misericordia University

***A Symposium on What a Psychology Major Means to Students in Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy***

**ABSTRACT:** Misericordia’s Psychology Department has formal relationships with two other departments on campus. Students in Occupational Therapy can earn a major in psychology by taking several courses beyond those required in their major. Several others earn a minor in psychology. The Psychology major serves as a “feeder” program for our program in Physical Therapy. These students earn their degrees in three and a half years and then, if they meet all criteria are admitted into the Physical Therapy Program. Students from Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy were asked to discuss the value of psychology to their respective programs.

**ROOM 2: ROUNDTABLE**

Jane S. Halonen, University of West Florida and Eric R. Landrum, Boise State University

***The APA Undergraduate Guidelines and You: A Round Table Discussion***

**ABSTRACT:** During this round table discussion, Jane and Eric will host an audience discussion about the current APA Undergraduate Guidelines, as well as update audience members about the revision to the Guidelines that is currently underway. The aspirational nature of the goals and possible assessment strategies will be discussed. Of particular interest is how audience members will report if the publication of the APA Undergraduate Guidelines has or has not changed how local Departments of Psychology operate.

**ROOM 3: ROUNDTABLE**

Albert Bramante, Union County College

***Giving Students Options for Assignments***

**ABSTRACT:** Typically, students enter a classroom and are provided with a syllabus with specific guidelines and requirements. This includes the textbook, and how the student will be assessed. This provides the student with minimal to no input as to how they can uniquely contribute to the course. This discussion will include several ideas of choices to present to students.

**BREAK: 11:15-11:30**

**SESSION 9: 11:30AM-12:00PM**

**ROOM 1: ORAL PRESENTATION**

Robert Bohlander, Wilkes University

***Shrink-Rapt: The Use of Clinical Tales in the Teaching of Psychology***

**ABSTRACT:** Undergraduate psychology faculty who teach in the clinical area often have current or prior experience in clinical practice. To what extent can this experience contribute to achieving educational goals in lower- and in upper-level psychology courses? Can it foster student engagement in the classroom? What are the main issues or concerns, ethical and otherwise, about the use of clinical case material? Are there disadvantages to using such material? These issues, as well as the results of student perspectives on this practice, will be addressed.

**ROOM 2: ORAL PRESENTATION**

Peter M. del Rosario, Tania Doverspike, Katelynn Drake and Marcela Desemone, Marist College

***Multicultural and Diversity-focused Articles in the Teaching of Psychology Journal***

**ABSTRACT:** A content analysis will be conducted of all the multicultural and diversity-focused articles appearing in the Teaching of Psychology Journal over the period of 1975 – 2011. The number of articles will be reported, as well as the identification of the proportion of diversity-related articles. The articles will be systematically reviewed according to the type of multicultural group that is the subject, the major teaching of psychology themes that emerge from the studies, the leading contributors, the sample characteristics, and the methodological considerations. Recommendations for conducting research on multicultural issues concerning the teaching of psychology will be presented and discussed.

**ROOM 3: ORAL PRESENTATION**

O.J. Sizemore, Iona College

***Grade Inflation: Academia's Weather?***

**ABSTRACT:** Grade inflation refers to the rise of grade point averages that are unrelated to performance or knowledge. To address this issue, some researchers have suggested indexing models to normalize grades, while others have sought to lower GPAs by publicizing course grades to the campus community. The current research utilized individualized feedback to lower the average GPA in courses taught by adjunct faculty. Over a period of two years, adjunct-assigned grades declined significantly in each regular semester. Moreover, grades declined from significantly higher than full-time faculty grades to slightly below.

**ROOM 4: STUDENT POSTER SESSION JUDGING: JUDGES AND PRESENTERS ONLY**

**SESSION 10: STUDENT POSTER SESSION**  
**12:00PM-1:00PM**

**ROOM 4: STUDENT POSTER SESSION: OPEN TO ALL CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS**

***Poster 1***

*Chelsea Carlson*

Sacred Heart University

Faculty Sponsor: Deirdre Yeater, Ph.D., Sacred Heart University

**Personality Traits in North American River Otters (*Lontra Canadensis*)**

**Poster 2***Alex M. Borgella and Sarah Yi*

James Madison University

Faculty Sponsor: Matthew R. Lee, Ph.D., James Madison University

**The Role of Traditional Gender Role Beliefs in Predicting Male and Female Homophobia****Poster 3***Branden Fredericks*

Farmingdale State College

Faculty Sponsor: Michael Goodstone, Ph.D., Farmingdale State College

**Comparing Self and Other Assessment to Test Sociometer and Self-broadcasting Theories****Poster 4***Elphys Alvarez*

Dominican College

Faculty Sponsor: Fabiana Desrosiers, Ph.D., Dominican College

**Career Aspirations and Occupational Choices: An Analysis on Age and Gender****Poster 5***Laura Bueche*

Farmingdale State College

Faculty Sponsor: Michael Goodstone, Ph.D., Farmingdale State College

**Qualifications of Stay-At-Home Parent Status on Perceived Qualifications for Males and Females****Poster 6***Brittany Valenti & Matthew Graves*

Farmingdale State College

Faculty Sponsor: Jennifer Gonder, Ph.D., Farmingdale State College

**An Investigation of the Effects of Leadership and Member Familiarity on Adaptability, Team Member Exchange, and Team Performance****LUNCH 12:30PM-2:30PM****Lunch will overlap with the student poster session from 12-12:30*****Presentation of Student Awards******Feist-Levine Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Psychological Research******Westchester County Psychological Association Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Psychological Research******Closing Remarks***

**Special thanks to the National Science Foundation Division of Undergraduate Education and the Transforming Undergraduate Education in Science, Engineering Technology and Mathematics program for its support of The FSC TOP Conference**

**Farmingdale State College Department of Psychology**

*Dr. Jennifer Gonder, Conference Co-Chair*

*Dr. Marya Howell-Carter, Conference Co-Chair*

*Dr. Eugene Indenbaum, Department Chairperson*

*Dr. Michael Goodstone, Director, Applied Psychology Program*

*Dr. Rommel Robertson*

*Dr. Judith Levine*

*Ms. Barbara Sarringer*

**Our deepest thanks for your help in creating a wonderful 2012 conference. We hope to see you again in 2013 for another great meeting!**

## **Increasing Undergraduate Student Awareness and Appreciation of Affirmative Action**

Matthew R Lee and Amanda L. Campbell  
James Madison University

**Summary:** Participants in this workshop will learn about the classroom intervention, how to create their own version of it, and some ideas about how to process it with their students. In addition, the facilitator will invite participants to complete the activity and note their reactions afterward. Commonly asked questions and prompts students have in response to this activity will be discussed, and some data regarding the main effect of exposure to this activity will be presented.

**Abstract:** Myths about the history and policies regarding affirmative action persist among young people (e.g., Plous, 1996, 2003). The proposed workshop will detail an innovative simulation of a college admissions process meant to promote more accurate understanding and awareness of current affirmative action policies for students in a course on psychology and cultural diversity. During the hour, participants will engage in the activity and discuss their reactions to it as well as how they could implement it into specific coursework in psychology. Some data from a quasi-experimental study using this methodology (N = 164) will be presented as well, illustrating the potential positive effect of including such an activity in the curriculum.

**Summary:** Social justice-minded instructors seeking to educate social science majors about affirmative action policies have met resistance, particularly from majority-group students. Using a large national sample of nearly 280,000 first-year students, Sax and Arredondo (1999) identified that almost 50% of respondents were in favor of abolishing affirmative action in college admissions and moreover White students were the most against affirmative action. Women across all races, compared to men, were found to be more in favor of keeping affirmative action. In Harrison et al.'s (2006) meta-analysis of 126 research samples in which attitudes toward affirmative action in employment settings were assessed, sexism, racism, and perceiver race were found to be associated with negative attitudes. The authors suggested, however, that many perceivers have misconceptions and misinformation about affirmative action. In fact, many people overlook statistics that show women and racial minorities in particular are not being promoted, hired, or paid at commensurate rates to men and Whites in the US (e.g., Plous, 1996; Selden, 2006). Others believe that racial minorities, gays and lesbians, and women have "ample" opportunities and therefore affirmative action is no longer needed (except for people with handicaps), suggesting a color-blind or purely meritocratic system is strongly preferred (e.g., national poll published by Quinnipiac University Polling Institute, 2009). Given the persistence of negative attitudes toward affirmative action and a lack of clarity over its definition, how can instructors best teach about such a divisive concept? Bohmer and Oka (2007) have one example, employing a sociology coursework sequence involving brief, closed-ended choices in simulated hiring and loan-giving scenarios, readings about affirmative action, and classroom discussion. In their model, students are presented with demographics of a campus and asked to select someone to hire from one of two choices (usually one choice is a White male, the other is a gender or ethnic minority), and to defend their answers informed by information about affirmative action learned in class. Notable classroom activities designed to challenge student opinions about meritocracy, democracy, and fairness and equity regarding decision making

should help students to appreciate cultural diversity, yet the Bohmer and Oka (2007) model does not meet the criteria of what Rest refers to as cognitive moral education (1986). This type of classroom method (CME) is said to promote a deeper understanding of ethics, values, and morals, often by placing students in a context where they are applying course content in a realistic simulation to try to understand the range of perspectives regarding a particular concept. The present workshop will detail a novel classroom intervention that makes use of a brief reading about affirmative action (Brunner, 1997) and a more directed simulation of the college admissions process.

## Using Introductory Psychology Courses to Measure Institutional Core

Katherine Zaromatidis and Patricia A. Oswald  
Iona College

**Abstract:** The psychology department at Iona College is in the process of developing student learning outcomes not for attainment of departmental goals, but rather for attainment of the college core curriculum goals. As more and more accrediting bodies have focused on student learning outcomes, this is becoming standard practice in many psychology departments. Dr. Zaromatidis and Dr. Oswald will discuss challenges faced in this process, such as the creation of operational definitions and the development of course assignments that assess student attainment of these learning outcomes.

**Summary:** Dr. Katherine Zaromatidis is a full-time associate professor at Iona College. Her teaching experiences include introductory statistics, research methods, educational psychology, and a variety of assessment courses. Dr. Patricia A. Oswald is a full-time professor of psychology at Iona College who has taught a variety of courses including introductory statistics, advanced statistics, research methods, advanced research methods, and a number of industrial-organizational courses. A few years ago the psychology department of Iona College created and adopted learning goals and performance outcomes for all psychology courses modeled after the American Psychological Association Standards for Undergraduate Instruction (APA, 2002). The department then created an assessment map, which includes the specific courses and the types of assessments to be used in assessing student attainment of departmental goals. More recently as part of the preparation for Middle-States Accreditation, the psychology department has been asked to undertake a similar process in developing student learning outcomes not for attainment of departmental goals, but rather for attainment of the college core curriculum goals. Similar to many institutions, introductory psychology courses are included in the core curriculum at Iona College. The introductory course at Iona College is divided into two semesters, with students being able to satisfy the social sciences requirement if they successfully complete both courses. Students can also fulfill the social sciences requirement by taking two courses in another discipline such as sociology and/or political science. Dr. Zaromatidis and Dr. Oswald will discuss the challenges faced in this process. Challenges included the creation of operational definitions for the goals included in the Iona College Mission Statement and developing student learning outcomes that were applicable to the social sciences rather than specific to psychology. The development of course assignments that assess student attainment of these learning outcomes will also be discussed.



## **The Challenges of Undergraduate Internships: Are they Worth the Effort?**

Comila Shahani Denning, Terri Shapiro, Kristin Weingartner  
Hofstra University

**Abstract:** In today's competitive job market, undergraduates need to find something extra to help them stand. One solution is to have students participate in internships related to their major. Research has shown that students who participate in internships graduate with higher GPAs, are more valued by employers, receive higher starting salaries, and are more likely to have a job at graduation. The issues of finding and completing a paid internship versus an unpaid internship are discussed. In a round table discussion we will address the logistics of incorporating undergraduate internships into the Psychology curriculum.

**Summary:** Education, in 2010 more than 1.6 million people graduated college with a bachelor's degree. This is a 32 percent increase from 2000. One result of this is greater competition in the job market for fewer jobs since 2008 and the recession. Thus, students need to find ways to stand out in a crowded job market. One common strategy is to try to find an internship relevant to the students' academic major. More recently, schools have been promoting internships for students of all majors and many schools have added internships to their requirements for graduating (Burnsed, 2010). According to a report by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), approximately 75 percent of the 9.5 million students that attended a four year college have participated in an internship by the time they graduate (Sachs, 2011). Research has shown that undergraduate internships generally have positive outcomes for students. Gault, Leach, and Duey (2010) examined the relationship between internship participation and employment marketability. They assessed whether employers felt internships made students more valuable via a survey of undergraduate business internship employers. Results showed that most of the employers felt that an internship added value to the student in terms of future job performance. Most claimed that they would rehire their current intern. Employers also indicated that they would be more likely to hire graduates with internship experience than those without, and that higher performing interns would likely receive higher starting salaries. In a survey of students, those with internships indicated receiving higher starting salaries than those without internships, and also reported higher levels of overall job satisfaction for their first and current positions than non interns (Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000). Further, Knouse, Tanner, and Harris (1999) found that students who completed internships had significantly higher GPAs at graduation than those who did not and were more likely to have a job at graduation than those who did not. As we can expect most students would prefer paid to unpaid internships. Unfortunately, with today's tough job market many college students have been forced to take unpaid internships. According to the results of NACE's 2011 Student Survey, of the 20,000 senior interns surveyed, 52 percent of them were paid. Those who completed a paid internship were more likely to get a job offer, have a job by the time they graduated, and receive a higher starting salary than those students who completed an unpaid internship or no internship. According to Koc and Collins (2011), this difference may be explained by the intern's duties. Specifically, paid interns spent more time on professional duties that appeals to employers, while unpaid interns spent more time on clerical activities. While it is clear that internship experiences at the undergraduate level can have a strong impact on students' future success, what is less clear is how to make these internship opportunities accessible to undergraduates. Two of the current authors have had experience running a graduate internship program and have found that on an internship, particularly if it is

paid, you do what the organization needs you to do. While students expect and hope for intellectually challenging work relevant to their major, oftentimes the student intern gets the left over work, the grunt work. When organizations pay the students to work, the expectation is that project deadlines will be met. Often, project deadlines may conflict with school deadlines. We can also argue that a student might take their responsibilities more seriously when they are being paid for their work. This is not volunteer work that they can pick and choose; this is a professional responsibility that they must be accountable for. Another issue that is that when an organization pays the student, the organization has the right to select the student. This may make it harder for students with some skills deficits to be successful at getting an internship. Schools that offer a paid internship program may have an advantage in student recruitment, especially for private universities. We invite all interested participants to join us in a round table discussion about the logistics of incorporating undergraduate internships into their Psychology curriculum. We will address a number of questions that arise during the decision-making process, including how to identify agencies that are willing to take on undergraduate interns, how to foster students' skills in seeking agencies on their own, and how to monitor the students' experiences to ensure that they are learning the "tools of the trade." We will also address the academic components of an internship. For example, what goals and objectives must an internship experience satisfy to count toward a degree requirement?

## **Bridging the Gap: Teaching I/O psychology to Traditional Psychology Undergraduates**

Dr. Sayeedul Islam  
Farmingdale State College

**Abstract:** Perlman and McCann (1999) reported that more psychology departments are offering I/O psychology courses. In addition recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that I/O psychology is a growing field. Studies conducted by Kirnan, Reilly, and Dekcer (2002) indicated that up to 72% of graduates from an undergraduate I/O psychology program were able to find employment a year after graduation. However teaching I/O psychology courses at the undergraduate level continues to provide new challenges for instructors. Most students in psychology courses do not have a business oriented perspective . Without this perspective, many of the concepts found in traditional I/O courses may seem foreign to these students. This round table discussion will allow faculty who specialize in teaching I/O courses a forum where they might share information, projects and techniques that they use.

**Summary:** Carlson and Millard (1983) and Maynard, Geberth, and Joseph (2002) conducted analyses of the coverage of I/O psychology in introductory psychology textbooks. Both studies found that approximately 25% of introductory psychology textbooks covered I/O psychology as a full chapter. This indicates one of the major challenges that I/O psychology education faces in traditional psychology departments. Perlman and McCann (1999) reported that more psychology departments are offering I/O psychology courses. In addition recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that I/O psychology is a growing field. Studies conducted by Kirnan, Reilly, and Dekcer (2002) indicated that up to 72% of graduates from an undergraduate I/O psychology program were able to find employment a year after graduation. However teaching I/O psychology courses (Industrial Psychology, Organizational Psychology, Organizational Behavior, Organizational Training and Development) at the undergraduate level continues to provide new challenges for instructors. Most students in psychology courses do not have a business oriented perspective . Without this perspective, many of the concepts found in traditional I/O courses may seem foreign to these students. This roundtable discussion will allow faculty who specialize in teaching I/O courses a forum where they might share information, projects and techniques that they use.

## Using Social Influence to Sell Students on the Value of Psychology and the Liberal Arts

Anne E. Stuart, Sandra A. Segó, & Robert Houry  
American International College

**Abstract:** Psychology, particularly the area of social influence and decision making, provides the framework on which we designed an interdisciplinary course that enriches the career-focused mindset of today's college students with the knowledge, skills, and values consistent with a liberal arts education. Using readings from popular press books (e.g., *Freakonomics*, *Blink*, and *Tipping Point*) in addition to a basic textbook, we cover classic and innovative examples from the core social sciences and related applied fields. The course reinforces the AAC&U and APA learning outcomes that are desired in the business world and are transferable skills utilized in many diverse fields.

### Using Social Influence to Sell Students on the Value of Psychology and the Liberal Arts

The current generation of college students seems to be disinterested in the liberal arts and often does not understand the benefit of a liberal arts education. The students, and many of their parents, are interested in a college degree that will equal a job – preferably a well-paying job that can be found quickly upon graduation.

This career-focused mindset blinds students to the essential knowledge and skills gained through a liberal education. The very courses students dismiss as unnecessary for their career success are the ones that develop the skills employers seek in new employees. The value of a liberal education is so important that the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) established the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative in 2005. The LEAP objectives include: knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world; intellectual and practical skills, including inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, information literacy, teamwork and problem solving; personal and social responsibility, including civic knowledge and engagement – local and global, intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning and action, and foundations and skills for lifelong learning (AAC&U, 2011). Within psychology, Goals 6 through 10 of the APA's Learning Objectives for Undergraduate Psychology (APA, 2007) stress the skills reinforced in psychology essential to the liberal arts education.

Even though the APA Learning Objectives emphasize skills essential to the liberal arts education, the typical Introductory Psychology course is generally not taught with these skills in mind. This is despite the fact that the Introductory Psychology course often fulfills a liberal arts, or general education, requirement. On many campuses, the Introductory Psychology course is taught as an introduction to the major discipline. The course, and corresponding textbooks, emphasize the breadth of the field. Simply look at the typical Introductory Psychology textbook. It contains around 18 different areas that are not necessarily linked together. In a one-semester course, many instructors will pick and choose the topics of interest to them in order to fit the content into the traditional 16-week semester. In order to cover the necessary material, the course is not necessarily focusing on skill development. The course becomes a smorgasbord of topics, and students often have difficulty integrating the topics into a cohesive whole. Professors may

point out that psychology is all around, in peer pressure, advertising, and compliance, but students struggle to see the footprint psychology leaves in these areas.

What if we could sell our students on the benefits of the liberal arts by highlighting the essential career skills that can be gained through a liberal arts education? What if we could do this through an engaging course that clearly links topical content with students' lives and their potential future careers? We did just that by designing a course on social influence and decision making that illuminates the social forces that impact people's daily lives – from choosing a brand of toothpaste to implementing organizational change. This interdisciplinary course provides students with the theoretical frameworks of social influence and decision making at an introductory level. To help students understand the underlying concepts and applications, we use culturally relevant examples from the core social sciences as well as related applied fields such as criminal justice, communications, and business. In addition to using a social influence textbook, we rely on readings from popular press books (e.g., *Freakonomics*, *Switch*, *Blink*, and *Tipping Point*) for classic and innovative examples of social influence and decision making at work in different aspects of our culture.

The course was designed to reinforce essential learning outcomes recommended by the APA and AAC&U's LEAP initiative. Through readings, discussions, assignments, and a culminating course project, students are demonstrating knowledge, skills, and values consistent with a liberal arts education. To be successful in the course, students must think critically and analyze situations, they must utilize both communication and information fluency skills, and they must engage in problem solving. The culminating course project requires students to implement social change, of either a behavior or attitude, on campus. Using the information from the course, students must work together to plan and carry out their project. They must incorporate a measure of the effectiveness of their project. Such a project forces students to become engaged in their community and helps to foster interpersonal skills and the ability to work well with others. Not only does the project serve as a useful assessment of student learning in the course, but it can also empower students to realize that they are acquiring skills that they can bring to their careers.

We chose to design a course on social influence and decision making because it was the perfect intersection of our interests: social psychology, cognitive psychology, and management and marketing. However, this type of course could be developed around many of the traditionally upper-level topical courses in psychology. For example, human sexuality, abnormal psychology, health psychology, developmental psychology, and psychology of aging could all be transformed into an interdisciplinary course focused on the liberal arts education. Professors simply need a topic they are passionate about and that students can relate to from society or their daily lives. The key to making the course successful is to begin with the concrete examples and drill down to the more abstract theoretical aspects.

We are piloting our newly-designed course this semester (Spring 2012) as a Seminar in the Social Sciences as part of our College's Honors Program. For students in the Honors Program, the course fulfills a General Education requirement within the social sciences. The students in the course are either part of the Honors program or were allowed into the course with permission of the instructors. They include first-year students through seniors in a variety of disciplines across our College's three Schools. At this point in the semester, the students report

enjoying the course and seeing the connection between the class readings, the class lectures, and their projects. As one student responded when we asked them what they liked about the course so far: “I find the readings very insightful into real life situations. They relate well to the lectures and give good ideas on how to proceed with our project.”

At this stage, we do not have direct evidence that the course works, but it certainly is appealing to the current generation of career-driven students. Assuming the students successfully complete the course objectives, they will be developing transferable skills that they will use in their future careers. Counter to student attitudes that it is only the degree that matters, our discussions with industry leaders reveal that, in the current job market, companies are looking to hire a “complete” person. That is, a person with strong communication skills, strong information and technological literacy skills, the ability to think critically and creatively, and a strong sense of personal and social responsibility. Not only are these skills essential for current career options, these skills are crucial for careers that do not yet exist. Industry insiders have told us that it is easier to teach the business specifics to a person with strong communication and interpersonal skills than to try to teach communication and interpersonal skills to a person knowledgeable in business specifics. We as educators have a responsibility to help our students develop, and emphasize, these essential skills for future career employment.

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## **Analysis of Religion: The Value of a Psychological Approach**

Benjamin Wood, Ph.D.

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

Undergraduate psychology majors acquire a unique skill set which can be applied to issues that are relevant outside of the academy. In particular, psychology majors acquire abilities in research evaluation and design, conceptualizing along theoretical frameworks, and practice. Teaching a course on the psychology of religion to undergraduates offers an excellent opportunity to encourage students to think psychologically about issues that can be personally and globally relevant. The facilitator of the roundtable discussion titled *Analysis of religion: The value of a psychological approach*, offered at the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on the Teaching of Psychology presented by Farmingdale State College, will describe the themes discussed. Broadly, the roundtable discussion focused on how educators can encourage psychology undergraduate students to apply theory, research, and practice skills to the study of religion and spirituality.

The roundtable discussion facilitator initiated the discussion with a presentation of how he has taught courses on the psychology of religion. The facilitator structures his psychology of religion course around 4 focal points: definitions, theory, practice, and research. Definitions are a primary focal point because of the various meanings that are applied to terms such as religion and spirituality. When teaching the course, the facilitator has students write a paper on how they define psychology, religion, and the psychology of religion. This paper pushes students to make choices about how they view psychology and how it can be used to analyze religion.

The facilitator also discussed the concept of the *sitz im leben* and how it can be used to clarify further definitions. *Sitz im leben*, which is a German term roughly translated as “setting in life,” is a concept that originated in German historical theological textual criticism in the early 20th century (Buss, 1978). The concept was initially used in historical theological studies in order to focus not only on the content conveyed in a religious text but also on the historical community that created the text. Considering the *sitz im leben* allowed for new perspectives to emerge on how a religious idea may change and evolve depending on the community or context in which it is used. The *sitz im leben* concept helps students focus on the historical time period and relevant cultural variables related to particular religious topics that they analyze psychologically.

The second focal point of the psychology of religion course is theory. In particular, the facilitator focuses on having students apply the major theoretical systems in psychology (e.g., psychoanalytic, behavioral, cognitive science, evolutionary, existential, etc.) to religious topics. Whether students pursue further psychological degrees or enter the workforce after graduating, the facilitator has a goal of students being able to think psychologically about religious topics using different theoretical lenses. To achieve this goal the course is structured around reading and discussing primary sources that represent different theoretical perspectives (e.g., *The Future of an Illusion* by Sigmund Freud, *Young Man Luther* by Erik Erikson, *The Birth and Death of Meaning* by Ernest Becker, etc.). In each class, the students analyze a religious or spiritual variable from a particular theoretical perspective and evaluate the strengths and limitations as compared to the other theories.

In order to engage the students in their theoretical analyses, the facilitator has students pick a particular religious or spiritual practice that is interesting to them. Choosing a religious practice is the third focal point of the course. The chosen practice is also the subject of their final term paper. In the final paper the students must write a literature review on the topic, analyze the topic from a specific psychological theoretical perspective, propose an empirical study about the topic, and discuss their own perspective on the topic (e.g., whether it is congruent or in conflict with a psychological perspective). Throughout the course, the students return to their chosen religious practices to analyze them from the different theoretical perspectives.

During the discussion regarding choosing a religious practice to analyze, members of the roundtable talked about whether this assignment was challenging for some students. The facilitator spoke about how several students tend to have a difficult time analyzing a personally meaningful religious practice from a psychological point of view. Students often are concerned about theories being too reductionistic or overtly pathologizing. The facilitator spoke about how it is important to lead class discussions that are respectful. To encourage a respectful and balanced analysis, the facilitator has students examine limitations and strengths from each perspective. He also does not express his own opinion on a particular matter being analyzed. By not disclosing a personal opinion, the facilitator does not promote one belief system or theoretical perspective over another.

The fourth focal point of the course is an emphasis on research in the psychology of religion. Psychological research on religion is not novel. Seminal figures such as James, Freud, and Skinner all weighed in on the subject matter. Research on the psychology of religion has expanded greatly in recent years as evidenced by the creation of journals devoted to its study (e.g., *Religion, Mental Health, and Culture*; *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*). The final paper, which includes a literature review and a proposal for an empirical study, encourages students to engage with their religious topics from a research perspective. The students must examine the psychological evidence about their practices and conceptualize future directions for research. The facilitator discussed how he has students think about paradigms of research. He has students evaluate the strengths and limitations of taking a qualitative and interpretive approach as compared to a quantitative and positivist approach (see Belzen & Hood, 2006). Depending on the questions being asked, students choose different paradigmatic frameworks to shape their research proposals.

The roundtable members also discussed ways of approaching conflict and differences of opinion which may occur in a psychology of religion class. Heated discussions often occur in classes in which personally held religious beliefs may feel challenged or unsupported. The facilitator discussed how he draws upon group therapy and empathic listening to help students move through and learn from these intense discussions. Safety and freedom to express personal viewpoints is emphasized throughout the course. Moreover, the facilitator will also ask students to explain why they are upset about particular comments. By engaging students to think psychologically about themselves, the facilitator aims at fostering curiosity about emotional reactions rather than negative judgment.

A course on the psychology of religion can be an excellent vehicle for engaging students to think psychologically about important aspects of their lives and the lives of others. A course



on the psychology of religion can build upon undergraduate psychology skills of conducting research and thinking from a psychological theoretical perspective. The course presents challenges such as the limitations in studying religion and spirituality psychologically and students feeling that their religious beliefs are being criticized. Nevertheless, it is possible for students to engage in psychological work on religious topics in a respectful and open manner with support from an open and encouraging educator.

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## **Making Your Classroom Bloom: Integrating Bloom's Taxonomy in Teaching Psychology**

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**Summary:** The presentation focuses on integrating Bloom's taxonomy in teaching psychology , with emphasis on teaching introductory psychology. Specific pedagogical approaches representing the six levels of Bloom's famed hierarchy will be discussed, including hands-on approaches instructors can use in class to help enable students to achieve Bloom's educational objectives (revised) representing skills of remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating knowledge of psychology. Methods for evaluating student competencies across three levels of cognitive complexity (lower, middle, and higher) in Bloom's hierarchy will be discussed and evidence will be presented based on classroom implementation of a course assessment model utilizing active learning verbs as measurable outcomes. The workshop will also demonstrate how instructors can integrate assessment of educational objectives in the Bloom framework with the set of learning goals stipulated by the APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Major.

## **A Symposium on What a Psychology Major Means to Students in Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy**

Charles LaJeunesse  
Misericordia University

**Abstract:** Misericordia's Psychology Department has formal relationships with two other departments on campus. Students in Occupational Therapy can earn a major in psychology by taking several courses beyond those required in their major. Several others earn a minor in psychology. The Psychology major serves as a "feeder" program for our program in Physical Therapy. These students earn their degrees in three and a half years and then, if they meet all criteria are admitted into the Physical Therapy Program. Students from Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy were asked to discuss the value of psychology to their respective programs.

**Summary:** For several years running, Misericordia University's Psychology Department has had formal relationships with two other departments on its campus. These programs are Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy. These relationships our Psychology Department has with these departments are professional and cordial, and clearly our students gain from our sustained relationships. It is our understanding that our arrangement with our Occupational Therapy Department is unique, at least as it pertains to the Northeastern area of this country. Conversely, the arrangement we have with our Physical Therapy program can be found on several regional campuses including the University of Scranton and Arcadia University. Students in our Occupational Therapy can earn a major in psychology by taking courses beyond those required in their major. These courses include a course from our developmental sequence, a course from our biological sequence, a communication course, a capstone course and practicum. Several others earn a minor in psychology. Students in Occupational Therapy earn a B.S. in Psychology as opposed to a Health Sciences default degree. It should be noted that to broker this agreement took much time and effort as it had to get approval not only from the internal departments on our campus but also the Occupational Therapy department needed approval for this arrangement from the American Association of Occupational Therapy. Graduates from our Occupational Therapy Department who have returned to campus have reported they felt their psychology degree made them more marketable than those choosing not to. This information is anecdotal and cannot be applied to the experience of all choosing this option. Occupational Therapy Program on our campus is very Psychology driven and they employ Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as their overarching philosophy. Many in our Occupational Therapy Department have told me that the Occupational Therapy is often confused with Physical Therapy. It has to do with how one occupies their time in meaningful ways. It might involve helping children with Autism to develop hand strength or finger dexterity by having these children engage in activities, such as squeezing a ball, to focus on these muscle groups. Others help the aged who are not ambulatory to live as independently as possible by building, for example, ramps to help them wheel into their home, or build a apparatus to help them eat independently. In addition to this longstanding relationship with our Occupational Therapy Department, the Psychology major serves as a "feeder" program for our program in Physical Therapy. Our Physical Therapy Department adopted this format when they began offering a Clinical Doctorate in Physical Therapy in 2009. Other majors on campus also serve as feeders into this program including Health Care Management, Biology, and Business. These students earn their degrees in three and a half years

and then, if they meet all prerequisites, are admitted into the Physical Therapy Program. The students entering our Physical Therapy program traditionally demonstrated the most outstanding academic skills on our campus, and they often participating in sports or other campus activities. It would appear that having a background in Psychology would benefit anyone entering a helping field. Even if our Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy work in a Physical Disabilities setting, it would benefit the students to first understand the psychological ramifications of enduring an accident or stroke. In addition, many who enter such settings have drug/alcohol dependency problems, are on psychotropic medications, have been diagnosed with a primary diagnosis such as bipolar disorder or major depression, or could have symptoms consistent with a personality disorder. Those working in Psychiatric setting will experience psychopathology firsthand. It is hard to see how backgrounds in other majors such that feed into our Physical Therapy Program would have comparable value. And while those in Occupational Therapy have considerable psychology influence in their curriculum, those earning the bachelor in psychology have that much more that may both shape way these Occupational Therapists see and address their patients, and they may be more aware of disorders that are often the reaction to physical challenges and in some cases disorders that lead to taking risky, accident prone behavior. At this conference, students from Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy who earned a B.S. in psychology were asked to discuss the value of psychology to their respective programs. We hope this symposium addresses the theme of this conference as envisioned by those outside our Department. We hope to provide a symposium with each us having an opportunity to share the value psychology brings to our respective programs, and then open the session to questions and answers, as we believe this presentation may well hit a cord with many faculty who would like to see psychology applied to other departments on their campuses.

## **General and Individualized Feedback Improve Adjunct Grading Standards**

O.J. Sizemore

Iona College

Grade inflation refers to the rise of student grade point averages that are unrelated to improved student performance or knowledge. Grade inflation has been a popular topic in major media outlets, but has not attracted significant research efforts in psychology. A search for the term “grade inflation” in a highly-utilized internet search engine yielded nearly 400,000 entries. The same search in PsycINFO yielded 40 entries. Expanding the academic database search to include education and business databases yielded roughly a thousand entries.

At the intersection of public and academic interest is Stuart Rojstaczer. A former Duke University professor, his web-site provides the raw data for research published in *Teachers College Record* (Rojstaczer & Healy, 2010). In their article, they contend that average GPA has risen from 2.35 to 3.10 in the period from 1930 to 2010. Their GPA data came from approximately 160 institutions that have published grade information or sent them to the authors upon request. It should be noted that only a handful of institutions provided grade records for the entire period of study. Moreover, their sample constitutes only a small fraction of tertiary educational institutions and, while most are well-known, they do not constitute a random sample and it is unlikely that the sample is representative.

A more systematic approach (Kuh & Hu, 1999) compared data from over 50,000 students who responded to the College Student Experiences Questionnaire in the mid-1980’s and the mid-1990s. It showed a rise from 3.07 to 3.31 in self-reported grades during the time period studied; relative to Rojstaczer and Healy’s data, these suggest a larger and steeper increase in grades. Alternatively, Adelman (2004) reports that average grades rose from 2.94 to 3.04, from the mid-70’s to the mid-90’s, based on a study of 20,000 transcripts from 3,000 institutions. Collectively,

these sources support the assertion that grades have risen, but uncertainty remains regarding its size and extent.

Rising grades alone, however, do not constitute grade inflation. It must be demonstrated that the increased grades are independent of, or disproportionate to, changes in student knowledge or performance. Such a demonstration seems on its face difficult, if not impossible (Adelman, 1995), because it would require assessment of knowledge and performance independent of grades. Additionally, changes in technology and disciplinary content over the last 30 years, for example, would likely render such comparisons meaningless.

Recognizing rising grades as a problem, regardless of cause or justification, there have been attempts to address the issue in practical terms. Several researchers have suggested indexing models that would “relativize” grades, rather than providing them as absolute indicators (e.g., Kassahun, 2008; Nagle, 1998). Others have sought to lower average GPA by publicizing course grades to the campus community (e.g., Bar, Kadiyali, & Zussman, 2009). None has proved to be successful or long-lived.

The current research offers a third approach to lowering course grades. Here, feedback was provided to adjunct instructors in psychology in an attempt to lower assigned grades. Instead of the public approach of Bar et al. (2009), adjunct faculty received information about course grades privately and in clear contrast to the grades of full-time psychology faculty. This effort was undertaken over a period of two academic years. Initially, adjunct faculty were given general feedback, but in successive semesters each instructor’s average GPA was compared directly with those of full-time faculty.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants were 29 adjunct faculty employed in the Psychology Department at Iona College (New Rochelle, NY) between September, 2009 and May, 2011 to teach undergraduate courses. Ten faculty held Master's degrees; 19 held doctoral degrees. Twenty-four of the adjuncts were females, five were males. The number of faculty employed varied from semester to semester.

### **Procedure**

Baseline grade data for adjuncts and full-time faculty were collected in Fall 2009. Grades for the adjunct faculty were reported by instructor by course; grades for full-time faculty were pooled with no identifying information regarding faculty names, courses, or sections. Average GPA was calculated for each section taught by an adjunct and a single average GPA was calculated for full-time faculty. Prior to the start of the Spring 2010 semester, each adjunct whose course GPA was higher than the average for full-time faculty received an email. The message noted that their course GPA was higher than that of full-time faculty and expressed concern that the adjunct might not be providing an intellectually challenging course. The email requested that the adjunct modify his or her course to reduce average GPA.

Prior to the start of the Fall 2010 semester, adjuncts were contacted again regarding grades. In the second phase, adjuncts were informed of the specific average GPA for his or her course and the average for full-time faculty. Those showing a decline during the previous semester were thanked and encouraged to make further improvements (if their average was above that of the full-time faculty) or to maintain their progress (if their average was equal to, or below, that of the full-time faculty). Those not showing a decline were reminded of the department's concern regarding course rigor and encouraged to improve. The third round of

notes to the adjuncts (prior to the beginning of the Spring 2011 semester) followed the same pattern as for the preceding semester.

For adjuncts who were hired during the timeframe of the study, general grade expectations were discussed during the interview. Once the adjunct had completed a full semester and has assigned grades, he or she was then contacted in the manner of the remainder of the adjunct cadre.

### Results

Data from the baseline period (Fall, 2009) showed that the average GPA for an adjunct class ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 0.38$ ) was significantly higher than that of full-time faculty, with a one-sample  $t(22) = 5.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\mu = 3.02$ . Following the first round of feedback notes, adjunct average GPA for Spring, 2010 declined ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 0.25$ ), but was not significantly different from the previous semester ( $p = .115$ , one-tailed) and remained statistically higher than that of full-time faculty [ $t(23) = 3.42$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $\mu = 3.17$ ].

With the introduction of individualized feedback, the average adjunct GPA showed a significant decline relative to baseline, but remained higher than full-time faculty (in part, due to a downward shift in the latter). Grades for adjunct faculty declined from Fall, 2009 ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 0.38$ ) to Fall, 2010 ( $M = 3.10$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ ), with  $t(41) = 2.76$ ,  $p = .005$  (one-tailed). In comparison with full-time faculty, adjunct grades remained significantly higher, with  $t(19) = 2.14$ ,  $p = .045$ ,  $\mu = 2.86$ .

During the final semester of data collection (Spring 2010), average adjunct GPA again showed a significant decline from baseline and was now slightly lower than their colleagues. For Spring, 2010, the average adjunct GPA was 3.06 ( $SD = 0.22$ ) and a  $t$ -test showed  $t(39) = 3.91$ ,  $p$



$< .001$  (one-tailed). Comparison with full-time faculty yielded a non-significant outcome,  $t(19) = -0.97, p = .347, \mu = 3.11$ .

### **Discussion**

Providing feedback to adjunct instructors regarding course grades produced declines in average GPA in three successive semesters, relative to the baseline established in Fall, 2009. Following the first semester of grade tracking (Spring 2010), the decline was not statistically significant. However, for the two next semesters (Fall, 2010 and Spring, 2011) the declines were statistically significant, relative to baseline. Initially, adjunct grades were significantly higher than full-time faculty grades and remained so until the final observation period (Spring 2011), at which time they were essentially equivalent to those of the full-time faculty.

The success of the current procedure must be view with caution. The cadre of adjuncts changed during the timeframe of this demonstration and it is possible that the declines were not related directly to changes in individual instructors, but rather to a shift in the composition of the cadre. Adjuncts receiving negative feedback may have declined future appointments rather than change the manner in which they taught or assigned grades. It also remains to be determined whether the gains evidenced here can or will be sustained in coming semesters.

There is also the question of whether this type of procedure would be effective with full-time faculty, particularly those who have attained tenure. Adjuncts may have been concerned that failure to comply with the request for lower average GPA might jeopardize future appointment, even though that possibility was never raised in the feedback to adjuncts and no adjunct was denied reappointment based on grade assignments. Full-time faculty, who are evaluated beyond their teaching assignments, might not be as concerned with compliance (c.f., Bar et al., 2009).

To the extent that the number of adjunct faculty have increased in the past few decades, it is possible that they constitute one upward force in the trend of rising grades. Retrospective studies of human resource records and analysis of curricular schedules could be used to determine the accuracy of subjective views that adjunct numbers have been increasing. In addition, it would be useful to assess the grading practices of graduate teaching assistants who often fill the role of adjuncts in larger institutions. It remains an open question whether the feedback procedure used here would be effective with full-time faculty.

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## **The Role of Traditional Gender Role Beliefs in Predicting male and Female Homophobia**

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Numerous studies have investigated attitudinal correlates of homophobia, as well as the demographic profile of the average perpetrator of homophobic acts. Researchers cite three main attributes as being the most consistent predictors of antigay attitudes and behaviors: gender of the perpetrator, previous contact with homosexual individuals and endorsement of traditional gender role beliefs (Herek, 2000; Parrott et al., 2001). Herek (2000) summarizes the available research on these correlates, purporting that the majority of individuals who self-report sexual prejudice are men, and that gender is indeed one of the highest predictors of homophobic behavior.

The link between being male and exhibiting homophobia has been demonstrated by several researchers (Herek, 2000; Parrott et al., 2001). Parrott et al. (2001) extended this hypothesis by studying some of the attitudinal and behavioral correlates commonly observed in homophobic individuals, primarily subscribing to the notion that higher levels of masculinity and the feeling of being threatened by femininity are indicative of a greater endorsement of antigay ideals. These individuals also tend to reliably score higher on scales assessing authoritarianism, to affiliate with fundamental religious groups (as opposed to more liberal denominations) and predominantly Republican or otherwise conservative political groups.

While males are more likely to have homophobic attitudes and engage in homophobic behaviors, there is evidence that homophobia persists in females (Herek, 2000). Basow and Johnson (2000) investigated how antigay attitudes and behaviors may manifest themselves in a female sample, asserting that these attributes function differently in females than in males. Measuring similar qualities as studies assessing primarily male samples (e.g., conservatism, authoritarianism and religiosity), the researchers found that female homophobia is not as easily predictable. However, females that subscribe to authoritarian and conservative ideologies are more likely to condemn homosexual behavior, consistent with male samples. Though females are less likely to express antigay attitudes as a whole, the small numbers of females that do express antigay attitudes are not likely to do so in defense of their gender and sexual identities being threatened. While males may feel a greater need to subscribe to traditional gender roles in order to affirm their masculinity, this is not as important in heterosexual females (Basow & Johnson, 2000).

The present study sought to demonstrate that endorsement of traditional gender role beliefs factor heavily into homophobic attitudes in a male sample while not factoring at all in a female sample. This research also seeks to demonstrate a relationship between males' levels of endorsement of traditional gender role beliefs and their levels of social conservatism. These results expand on the evidence in the literature being used to predict homophobia in females, a may offer predictive utility in this domain.

### Method

In a study conducted at a large Southeastern University, participants completed an online survey through Qualtrics depicted as a study investigating the link between music listening preferences and social attitudes. Participants filled out scales relating to social conservatism (SC; Henningham, 1996), gender role beliefs (GRBS; Kerr & Holden, 1996) and attitudes toward homosexuality (ATH; Kite & Deaux, 1986). Participants received a course credit in introductory psychology for taking the survey. Analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS v.19.

### Participants

The study consisted of 330 college students made up of predominantly females (N = 245) and some males (N = 85). Ninety-eight percent (N = 323) were heterosexual, 1 percent were homosexual (N = 3) and 1 percent were bisexual (N = 4). Ethnically, 85% were White (N = 269), 6% were Asian (N = 21), 4% were Black (N = 14), 4% were Hispanic/Latino (N = 12), and 4% (N = 14) were other races or biracial.

### Results

One-way Analyses of Variances (ANOVAs) were conducted on scales assessing social conservatism and attitudes toward homosexuality (SC and ATH, respectively) in two groups. The first group was comprised of males (N = 81) with high endorsement of traditional gender role beliefs (males scoring within the top 25% of scores on the GRBS; M = 77.74, SD = 16.60) and males with lower endorsement of traditional gender role beliefs (males scoring within the bottom 25% of scores on the GRBS). The second group was comprised of the upper and lower GRBS quartiles for females in the sample (N = 111).

As predicted, males with higher endorsement of traditional gender role beliefs scored higher on both the ATH (M = 19.32, SD = 3.00) [ $T(1,37) = 5.787, p < .001$ ] and the SC scales (M = 64.47, SD = 13.23) [ $T(1,37) = 7.766, p < .001$ ] than males with the lowest quartile scores (ATH – M = 14.85, SD = 1.66; SC – M = 34.95, SD = 10.41). However, females in scoring within the upper and lower quartiles on the GRBS did not differ from each other on either of the two scales [SC --  $T(1,109) = 1.038, p = .302$ ; ATH --  $T(1,109) = .027, p = .979$ ].

These results support the hypotheses put forth by Basow and Johnson (2000) and support theories popularized by Herek (2000) that claim that female homophobia persists through a very different mechanism than male homophobia. Males that subscribe to traditional gender role beliefs are more likely to feel more socially conservative and possess more antigay ideals than males who do not subscribe to these beliefs. Parrott et al. (2001) argue that homophobic sentiment in subsets of male populations may arise from these individuals feeling as though their masculinity is being threatened because of the presence of a homosexual. These results support this hypothesis under the assumption that greater endorsement of traditional gender role beliefs is indicative of a greater importance placed on masculinity. These results also support Basow and Johnson's (2000) hypotheses that female homophobia operates in a significantly different manner than male homophobia; since modern females' sexuality is not directly determined by their levels of femininity, females that do not endorse traditional gender role beliefs are not necessarily less likely to have homophobic beliefs. This is likely the reason why this study's manipulation was effective in predicting male, but not female, homophobia.

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