MATOP KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Capitalizing on Controversies to Teach Psychological Science
Dana Dunn, Ph.D. Moravian College

Controversies, public disputes and disagreements that galvanize public and private opinions, provide a forum for engaging students in solid psychological science and critical thinking. I will present some guiding frameworks for linking the rigorous discussion of societal flashpoints (e.g., race, disability, sex and sexuality) with empirically based conclusions about thought, emotion, and behavior. I will also offer advice on how to establish a constructive classroom where opinions can be aired freely and openly. Discussing controversial issues in psychology can enliven introductory, intermediate, and advanced courses.

Encouraging Civic Knowledge and Engagement: Exploring Current Events Through a Psychological Lens
Stacey Baugh & Debbie Van Camp, Trinity University, DC

Engagement with political, social, and civic issues is a fundamental hallmark of an educated population. However, in the United States, the level of adolescent and young adult engagement in the civic process is considered by many to be below desirable levels (Galston, 2003). More recently, this issue has been compounded by a high-school education system that is increasingly focused on test scores in math and reading and less focused on social studies curricula. Therefore, the task of educating students about civic issues may need to be more explicitly tackled at the college and university level. A course in psychology seems particularly well suited to address the paucity of civic knowledge related courses as well as encourage the open dialogue necessary to maximize the course’s efficacy. “Psychology in Current Events” was designed to allow students to explore current political events within society and seek to explain and understand them using psychological theories. Based on student feedback, the course successfully provided an opportunity for student engagement with political and civic issues. Future directions for this course will be discussed.


Curriculum Mapping for Beginners
Mukul Bhalla and Radhika Krishnadas, Argosy University

A common challenge for undergraduate psychology programs is to map their curriculum to programmatic and institutional goals, and subsequently to demonstrate that the goals have been met by graduating seniors. This hands-on workshop will guide participants through the process of creating a detailed map of the curriculum, where the expected competencies for coursework in the major are framed in measurable terms, and mapped to the overarching program outcomes and institutional goals, so they can be assessed in a systematic and objective manner. **Step 1:** Determine Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). **Step 2:** Review/revise/create Course Objectives (COs) for each course in the program (in objective, measurable terms, based
on course descriptions). **Step 3:** Map the COs for each course to the ILOs and POs, and determine which courses should introduce, which courses should reinforce, and which courses should be used to demonstrate mastery of the various program outcomes. **Step 4:** Create assignments and corresponding rubrics that are designed to tap all COs listed for the course. Mapping the curriculum helps faculty engage in reflective practice and determine the placement of each course in the curriculum, to ensure cohesiveness of their curriculum. In addition, designing learning activities based on the mapping helps scaffold and develop the skills that students need in order to be successful after graduation (e.g. written/oral communication, critical thinking, problem solving, information/quantitative literacy, awareness of professional ethics, and sensitivity to diversity). This is a more systematic process by which faculty can gather and evaluate data, and document that their graduates can demonstrate the competencies expected of them upon completion of their program of study.

### Students’ Performance and Self-Disclosure in Various Modes of Course Delivery
Ramezan Dowlati, Northern Virginia Community College

Distance education has made participants in a virtual learning environment feel like individuals who are distant from each other doing a self-paced work. This makes education less formal than before and provides room for more expression of individual differences in learning behavior. Generational changes in the developments of learning behavior have already interested psychologists and educators. Research in this area can help educational institutions and public policy makers have a more realistic approach as they try to reformat educational systems on a national or institutional level. This study has analyzed two aspects of students’ behavior (procrastination and self-disclosure) in distance learning courses and compared it with a similar group in traditional face-to-face classes. The target was a population of college students most of whom have spent their after-childhood years in the new century. The samples included groups of students who took courses in the field of psychology. The results revealed that students adjust to e-learning environment differently. Overall, the rate of procrastination appears to be, overall, higher among on-line students than their face-to-face peers. However, about half of the students in e-learning group were able to manage their time and work at a satisfactory level. Also, the comparison of self-disclosure behavior pointed at interesting differences. The ratio of students who shared higher quantity and quality of personal information was higher among the e-learning group.

### Teaching Positive Psychology through Film
Maria P. Fracasso, Towson University

Positive Psychology offers a scientific and systematic understanding of the emotions, characteristics, and traditions that allow individuals and communities to thrive and attain happiness (Peterson, 2006). The goal of this course is to discuss theories and research findings in the emerging field of Positive Psychology by examining core human character strengths and virtues found in movies. It presents practical ways writers, directors, and actors have been successful in portraying character strengths in movies, in attempt to promote and maintain well-being and happiness.

Movies are an excellent medium for representing strengths and virtues because they provide the audience with a plot that has deeper meaning. Movies are chosen based on a balanced portrayal of a characters having at least one of the virtues, obstacles
that conflict with the strength, how they overcome the obstacle, and an uplifting and
inspiring tone. The movie chosen to demonstrate the specific character strength and
virtue is shown either in its entirety or in clips that illustrate the theme of the class.
Class discussion examines how the movie portrays the strengths and virtues of the
characters in the movie, how the movies make the audience feel, the relationship to
characteristics of positive psychology, the advantages and disadvantages of how
much a movie depicts particular character strengths, and the effect of movie genre
on illustrating a particular strength.

This presentation will identify relevant movies that demonstrate character strengths and
virtues identified in the Positive Psychology literature. A description of the reflection
and reaction activities in which students engaged will be provided. Finally, ideas and
suggestions for future courses that integrate positive psychology constructs with
contemporary student interests such as media and music will be presented.

Globalizing the Curriculum
Mary Ann Massoglia, Howard Community College

The purpose of this presentation is to share my experiences with other faculty on my
students’ development and learning through this infusion of a more globalized content in
the core curriculum.

The infusion of a more globalized content into preexisting courses instills knowledge in
students to effectively engage the globalizing world and provides students varied
opportunities to explore contemporary cultural/global issues. In addition, the
development of innovatively globalized curricular material and coursework will promote
collaborative relationships between disciplines, faculty, student populations and cultures.
This, in turn, will lead to greater competence in navigating an increasingly globalized
world.
Specific goals include:
• Increasing student and faculty awareness and global understanding of international
  issues
• Promoting the need for the fostering of global awareness through the development and
  integration of globalized course materials in the classroom
• Providing ideas on how to infuse a global perspective into the core curriculum of
  content-laden courses
• Cultivating faculty collaborations between disciplines, specifically between Psychology
  and courses in General Biology I, Lifespan Development, and Environmental Life
  Sciences

Bridging Gaps with Virtual Mentoring
Scott Roberts & Wesley Vaughan, University of Maryland College ParK

Our goal is to create a series of online video modules that provide current and
prospective minority students with virtual mentoring on success at the undergraduate
level. These modules will be designed with research-supported psychological principals
to better address the issues and stigmas faced by minority students. We will discuss the
current research on challenges faced by minority students in college and some
strategies for overcoming these challenges. We will also present some preliminary qualitative findings from focus groups on campus at the University of Maryland. The information from these focus groups will include experiences and difficulties faced by University undergraduates, community college students, graduate students, and advisors. We will then discuss how we plan to address these issues in our video modules. Finally, we will host an interactive discussion with the audience to discuss the barriers faced by their students and how we might address those barriers with virtual mentoring.

Performance of Undergraduate Psychology Majors Learning Statistics
Tamarah Smith, Cabrini College

This presentation provides a first look at the performance of a sample of psychology students with American Psychological Association (APA) goals for quantitative reasoning and factors that may be related to such performance. The APA has outlined goals for psychology undergraduates including the need to build skills for interpreting and conducting psychological research (APA, 2007). A test designed to provide a practical means of measuring performance with these goals, specifically statistical skills, will be presented along with data pertaining to the validity of the test. In addition, results from a sample of 231 students who were assessed on their skills related to the APA goals using the new test will be presented. The keys findings suggested that overall students performed best at reading basic descriptive statistics ($M=74.5\%$), and worst when choosing statistical tests for a given research hypothesis ($M=30\%$). Performance on questions pertaining to confidence intervals ($M=38\%$) and discriminating between statistical and practical significance ($M=39\%$) was also low. Other findings suggested that students’ own liking and positive affect ratings were positive predictors of performance indicating a gain of 3-4% on the statistical test.

Using Psychology to Teach Testing Skills
Georgeana Stratton, Northern Virginia Community College

Many psychology students suffer from anxiety that impairs their ability to demonstrate what they have learned or lack the necessary study skills to prepare themselves adequately for tests. Too often they assume that their poor test performance is due to lack of ability in school in general or a particular subject and give up. As a community college teacher I have seen this pattern too much to do nothing about it. Thus, I developed a student workshop (using operant conditioning principles to induce them to come) to help students increase their studying and anxiety reduction skills while at the same time showing them how psychological research can be applied in their daily lives. My MATOP presentation will include research on stereotype threat and intelligence tests; cognitive psychology research on the spacing effect, elaboration techniques, and retrieval cues; social psychological research on the reciprocity norm, and more.