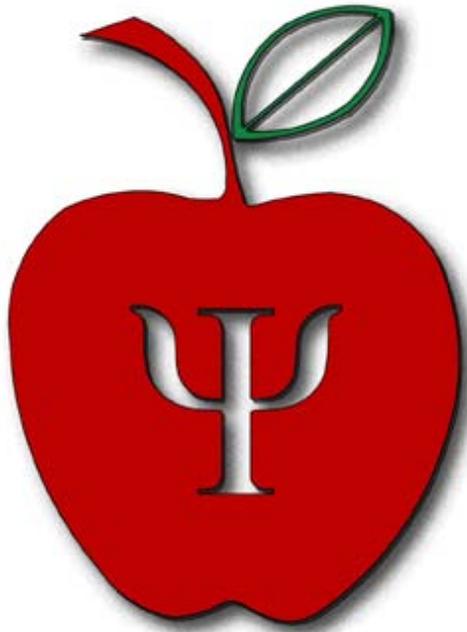


Essays from E-xcellence in Teaching Volume X

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Table of Contents

Title Page.....	1
Copyright and Other Legal Notices.....	2
Table of Contents.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Reflections on a Lifetime of Teaching and Learning <i>Richard L. Miller</i>	6
Incivility, Inattention, and Multitasking! Oh My! Creating Effective Learning Environments for Millennial Learners <i>Christy Price</i>	10
A Blueprint for the Future: From Puget Sound to Your Campus <i>Karen Brakke and Barney Beins</i>	15
Technology for Educators <i>Sue Franz</i>	20
Internationalizing Your Psychology Course <i>Richard S. Velayo</i>	25
Advising Dilemmas: Difficult Messages and Strategies for Delivering Them <i>Daniel T. Rogers and Monica J. Reis-Bergan</i>	32
The Vacuity of Positive Thinking: A Century of Pop Psychology <i>Luis A. Córdón</i>	37
To Customize or Not to Customize? Benefits and Disadvantages <i>Teresa L. Davis and Mary Ellen Fromuth</i>	41
On Blogging about Teaching Psychology <i>Dana S. Dunn</i>	45
About the Authors.....	48
About the Editors	51

Introduction

The Society for the Teaching of Psychology's PsychTeacher listserv, launched in 1998, provides a forum for psychology teachers at all levels to share ideas, seek advice, and discuss issues related to the teaching of psychology. Since the spring of 2000, the essay series *E-xcellence in Teaching* has been a feature of the listserv. Authors were invited to contribute essays related to various aspects of teaching psychology. This year's essays range from advice on internationalizing psychology courses, to thoughts on dealing with millennial students, to an introduction to the latest in technological tools.

In Chapter 1, Carnegie award-winning professor Richard Miller reflects on the joy and heart that distinguish great teachers. Miller maintains that scholarship and teaching are intimately connected, as good teachers always challenge students to think, to pose questions, and to seek answers to those questions.

Christy Price shares tips for dealing with so-called "Millennial" learners in Chapter 2. These students are sometimes characterized as multi-taskers with short attention spans and an apparent lack of respect for learning. Price presents practical tips for understanding these students' needs and preventing or minimizing incivility in the classroom and in student-faculty interactions.

In Chapter 3, Karen Brakke and Barney Beins summarize the recommendations of the 2008 National Conference on Undergraduate Education in Psychology. Participants at the NCUEP worked to create a blueprint for the future of undergraduate psychology. Brakke and Beins highlight several themes that came out of the conference, including the central role of science in the discipline of psychology, the importance of psychological literacy, and the "changing landscape" of students and technology.

Sue Franz's contribution in Chapter 4 highlights several new technological tools that can streamline the work of teachers. These include tools for sharing files across multiple computers (Dropbox), managing your e-mail (Xobni), keeping up with new information (Google Reader), and even writing that same comment over and over again on student papers (PhraseExpress).

In Chapter 5, Richard Velayo introduces readers to International Psychology, and provides advice for bringing an international perspective to psychology classes. Velayo presents a range of options for introducing content such as lecture, class activities, and targeted writing assignments.

Most college faculty serve as advisors as well as instructors. In Chapter 6, Daniel Rogers and Monica Reis-Bergan discuss advising "dilemmas" that come with the multi-faceted role of advising. How do we deal with students whose skill levels do not match their goals? What about that less-than-stellar student who is expecting a recommendation letter? Rogers and Reis-Bergan provide advice on asking ourselves the tough questions about how to deliver less-than-welcome news to students.

"Pop psychology" is ubiquitous in our culture. In Chapter 7, Luis Cordon examines the history of some of these ideas. Although the purveyors of pop

psychology often present their theories as the latest “big idea,” Cordon demonstrates that simplistic ideas about achieving wealth and happiness have been with us for a while.

In Chapter 8, Teresa Davis and Mary Ellen Fromuth provide a practical discussion of the costs and benefits of producing a customized textbook. Custom textbooks can be tailored to the specific needs of a course, and can often be less costly for students. On the other hand, creating a custom textbook can take an extensive amount of faculty effort. Davis and Fromuth’s essay can help faculty answer the question of “Should we or shouldn’t we?” In addition, they provide a helpful outline of the process involved in creating a customized text.

In our final essay in this volume (Chapter 9), Dana Dunn tells the tale of how he went from “reluctant” blogger to an enthusiastic blogger on the teaching of psychology for *Psychology Today*. Dunn provides advice for potential bloggers about the rewards and challenges of this form of writing for the general public.

Together, these essays make up Volume X of *E-xcellence in Teaching*. We thank all our contributors for sharing their thoughts and experiences with the readers of PsychTeacher, and with the rest of the psychology teaching community.

Reflections on a Lifetime of Teaching and Learning

Richard L. Miller

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I would be willing to bet that most of us can think of at least one or two teachers whose influence led us to where we are today. In fact, I would be surprised if most college graduates didn't have at least one professor who made a difference in the direction their lives took. What makes one teacher more influential than another? What qualities do highly effective and influential teachers possess? I find this question interesting and to answer it I have done what academics always do - consulted the literature. I have also observed other teachers, and most importantly, I have listened to my students. Many of our more thoughtful colleagues have addressed this issue of what makes a good teacher (see Buskist, in press). I make no claim that mine is any better or more universal than anyone else's. I do claim that it is based on what works for me.

For one thing, good teachers require students to think, to solve problems, to pose questions, and to wonder about the why behind what we know. In his 1901 book "American Traits," Hugo Munsterberg contrasted the education received in high school with that received at university. He pointed out that the high school distributes knowledge that has been collected, whereas the university strives to teach students to take a critical attitude toward all collected knowledge. The high school teaches facts while the university should teach students the methods whereby they can uncover the facts for themselves.

Now there are those who say, "this is scholarship, not teaching" and some folks are pretty convinced that the two are different things. I am not. To me, they are different words for a very similar process that is at the heart of teaching and learning - the process by which we come to understand that which we didn't understand before.

D. W. Hamlyn (1996) in his commentary entitled "The Concept of a University," proposed that one of the enduring achievements of universities, dating back to the Middle Ages, was the scholarship of discovery: "If learning is to be pursued and if knowledge is to be enlarged there have to be institutions like universities, which have the double role of pushing back the frontiers of knowledge and of enabling future generations to carry on that process" (p. 216).

At today's university the commitment to both scholarship and teaching seems incontrovertible. It is enshrined in mission statements, strategic plans, and promotion and tenure guidelines. This recognition of the university's dual purpose has led to an unfortunate division between teaching and research - a division recognized by the meta-analysis of 58 studies conducted by Hattie and Marsh (1996) that found no relationship between research productivity and teaching effectiveness. Their

recommendation was that universities should aim to increase the circumstances where teaching and research meet. How can this be done?

Harry Kirke Wolfe is arguably one of the most important psychologists and educators of the early 1900s. His impact on the education of a vast number of students is probably matched only by his unfortunate obscurity. Because he did not train graduate students, his legacy has been more indirect than that of some more famous psychologists. Throughout his professional career, he labored diligently at the University of Nebraska to enhance the education of his students, working with them individually in the laboratory. His undergraduate lab ranked third in the nation in producing students who would later attain doctorates. Three of his students who became presidents of APA commented that Wolfe had influenced them more than any other mentor (Benjamin, 1987, p.69). Wolfe received no teaching credit for his lab work and neither did his students. Yet enrollments in his courses continued to mushroom. A student of his once remarked that they were willing to “venture the work for the sake of the zest” (Benjamin, 1999, p. 52).

Like Harry Kirke Wolfe, the greatest joy I have in teaching is the process of mentoring undergraduate research. My earliest experience with undergraduate research took place in 1966. I was the undergraduate student and my topic was leadership and conformity. My motivation was to seek a way to actually resolve a long-standing late night dispute within my circle of friends using something like evidence instead of opinion. The thrill was to create new knowledge and to be the first to know it, not to mention sharing it with others (see Miller, 1967), a thrill I try to encourage with my own students.

For me, wisdom begins with wonder. As one of my students noted some time ago: Professors teach in class, but teachers teach in and out of class. During my time at UNK, I have mentored over 200 undergraduate research projects that have been presented at regional or national conferences. My students and I have very similar goals - to discover that which we did not know before. We tend to avoid replications and extensions and often take risks in examining little known or at least little written about phenomena. As a result, we have published over 20 articles together in professional journals and they have published 27 articles as sole author, which brings us back to the relationship between scholarship and teaching. At this point there are very few topics that I teach about, but about which I can't bring in the results of a student research project to expand my students' knowledge. And don't think that this doesn't get their attention - it's pretty cool to realize that fellow students can contribute to the knowledge base.

I would like to share some feedback from my students that captured some things about good teaching that apply to many of us and certainly help illuminate what it means to be a good teacher. Marci Rust, one of my students, once wrote: “I must confess, having such a close relationship with an instructor and advisor as caring and involved as you are has been demanding, and at times more than I thought I could handle. I realize now that it was during those particularly demanding times that you had more faith in my abilities than I did. You have never ceased to encourage and drive me to excel beyond what I thought was possible.” I think communicating to

students that they can be more than they thought possible is an important characteristic of good teaching.

Good teachers share their joy in being teachers. They are enthusiastic about their subject matter, about teaching, and about their students. They make their passion for teaching obvious to their students by taking an interest in the students themselves. Good teachers develop positive rapport with their students, which makes it more likely that students will attend class and participate in learning activities. One of my students once wrote: “I was a disinterested, unmotivated sophomore, lacking direction in my academic pursuits. You can probably imagine what a rude awakening to my indifference you were. I had never experienced an instructor with such a passion for teaching and knowledge; a passion you have never ceased to express over the past three years.” Another student, Emily Balcetis, wrote, “it is not enough to just want to teach others. The others have to want to be taught. You have the gift of encouraging others to want to be taught. And you can see your influence throughout the department in both the faculty and the students. That, to me, is what makes you a good teacher.”

Wilfred Grenfell once said: “Real joy comes not from ease or riches or from the praise of men, but from doing something worthwhile.” James Barrie suggested that, “Nothing is really work unless you would rather be doing something else.” Good teachers teach because that is what we would 'rather' be doing. We in the academy are incredibly privileged to have the opportunity to do what we love, with students who are ready and eager to share our enthusiasm.

One of my favorite quotes that I think also captures what it means to be a good teacher is by Charlene Szumilas [Principal, Holy Trinity High School, Chicago] who said: “We hope that during their time with us, our students gain an understanding of what it takes to live a worthy life. That they understand what injustice is and will work to correct it. That when they see those less fortunate, they assist them. That they reach out to others in need even when they themselves are struggling. That they give generously of themselves and their talents. Above all, we hope that they help those with whom they come into contact to see the value of an educated heart.”

Good teachers are those that assist their students in seeing the value of an educated heart – a heart that doesn't shy away from encouraging students to thoughtfully grapple with life's real challenges and controversies. It is perhaps the most satisfying of the many rewards of being a good teacher.

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Incivility, Inattention, and Multitasking! Oh My! Creating Effective Learning Environments for Millennial Learners

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Recently, I have been traveling quite a bit, presenting conference keynotes and faculty development workshops sharing my research on engaging Millennial learners (i.e., students born between 1981 and 1999). What has surprised me most is how frequently faculty interest turns to the discussion of student incivility. One colleague relayed a story in which a visiting professor came to her class as part of a series on diversity issues. At some point during the discussion, the focus turned to the conflict in the Middle East. One student who disagreed with the speaker's views jumped up from his chair, pointed his finger (thankfully his forefinger) at the visitor and yelled, "You are full of ____!" The student then tore up his notes and stormed out of the classroom, slamming the door behind him! A second colleague told of how she met with a student regarding a paper the student had written. A good professor, she was providing constructive feedback but the student rejected all criticism and demanded a grade change. He left and promptly posted an angry diatribe on ratemyprofessor.com which concluded with a very unproductive statement about the professor's backside, specifically describing his professor as "a fat ____." Finally, in gathering comments from official student evaluations of professors, I was surprised when a third colleague shared the narrative section of his evaluation in which a student simply wrote, "OMG! WTF!" If you are not familiar with these acronyms, you'll need to consult Wikipedia as I am sure my editors would not appreciate an explanation here. The bottom line is if you ask colleagues, I am confident you will get a consensus on this: Student incivility seems to be on the rise.

Let's Be Frank

When my child began his formal educational training a couple of years ago, I was told, "Pre-K is the new kindergarten, and kindergarten is definitely the new first grade." Let's be frank: college is the new high school; everyone's going! In the must-see PBS documentary *Declining by Degrees*, the filmmakers suggest that in order to achieve a middle-class lifestyle in our society, college is no longer an option - it is a necessity. This means the more elite and prepared student body of 15 years ago has given way to a much broader mix of students who vary widely in their level of preparedness, ability, and capacity for imbibing. As a result, we may see more

students exhibit the overtly uncivil behaviors described above. Some of these extreme behaviors may result from an increase in the number of students with mental health issues, while others may be a by-product of more open enrollment combined with the well-known characteristics of Millennial generation culture such as

- helicopter parenting that has extended adolescence and delayed development of independence;
- multimedia exposure that has shortened attention spans and heightened the need for engagement;
- being fully raised within the technological age such that information and everything else is available at the click of a mouse, resulting in a low tolerance for delay;
- and a decline in adherence to social rules (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Twenge, 2006).

Add a dollop of educational consumerism, and we have the perfect recipe for student incivility!

The Million Dollar Question

Now that I have won the award for stating the blatantly obvious, the million dollar question is, in the eloquent verbiage of our Millennial students: WTF do we do about it? Before I go any further, it is important to note this essay is not a personal rant about students behaving badly. On the contrary, I have an extremely connected and positive relationship with my students and I don't mean that in a creepy, unprofessional way! In any given semester, I have approximately 200 students and I find the vast majority of them to be extremely cooperative, conscientious, and excited about their learning. In my 18 years of teaching, I have experienced what I would describe as uncivil student behavior in class on only two occasions. On both occasions we were discussing research cited in David Myers' *Exploring Psychology* text, which describes the role of prenatal sex hormones in the development of sexual orientation. Typically, I am not an uber-Freudophile who attributes behaviors to rigid toilet training, but both of these self-proclaimed heterosexuals seemed to be exhibiting reaction-formation or what is commonly known as "thou dost protest too much" syndrome. The point of sharing this is perhaps in my many years of teaching I have simply been lucky, but perhaps not? What if there were a formula for preventing or at least minimizing student incivility? Well put away your Ouija board and pull out your highlighter because, in gathering my research on Millennial learners, I think I may have stumbled upon some answers.

Step 1: Shift your paradigm to prevention

The first tip for dealing with and responding to these behaviors is to not take them personally. One of my colleagues has suggested the word incivility implies a specific choice or intention on behalf of the student to be uncivil. Perhaps it would behoove us to describe these behaviors as "unproductive to the learning environment,"

since students often cluelessly exhibit them without realizing how their behavior is perceived and the negative impact they might have on the learning environment. In addition, many faculty seem to have concerns about very specific student types such as the belligerent student, the Neanderthal who makes offensive comments, the know-it-all, the verbal dominator, the class-skipper, the perpetually late, the early leaver, the talker, the texter, the sleeper, the newspaper reader, the web-surfer, the unprepared, the student who demands special treatment, and the list goes on. We may find ways to successfully respond to and alter each specific behavior, but if we really wish to create an ideal learning environment, we need to focus on holistic measures of prevention as opposed to fragmented reactions to specific infractions.

Step 2: Practice verbal judo - producing closeness, as opposed to distance

Recently a colleague relayed a story in which she asked her students to define Multicultural Education. One student replied, "*It is a Marxist plot to undermine public education.*" Many of us might be quick to attack this perspective; however, as professors interacting with students, we need to practice what is known as "verbal judo" in which we use our body language, tone, and words as tools to send a message that deescalates conflict. In conducting interviews with Millennial learners I have come across countless students who have described antagonistic professorial responses to what students perceive as accidental or minor infractions. One student described a professor who angrily locked the door when class began such that those who were late could not attend. Another relayed that his professor became irate when the battery ran low on his criminal offender monitoring ankle bracelet and it began to beep. The lesson to be learned here is, *it is never productive to be defensive, to be reactionary, or to express a strongly negative emotional tone with a student.* Yet I frequently hear professors describe with bravado interactions in which they criticize, humiliate, deride, and belittle the very people they are charged to teach, develop, and inspire. It is imperative to acknowledge that every interaction we have will typically produce either closeness or distance. There is little neutrality in our dealings with students. The more we engage in distance-producing interactions with students, the more we can expect noncompliance and unproductive student behaviors in return. When we choose to fight and even feel that we have won these small battles with students, we set ourselves up for losing the war as we lessen our overall ability to assist them in achieving the learning outcomes of the courses we teach. Conversely, each closeness-producing interaction we have with students builds rapport, shows them we care, and prevents the likelihood of resistance and incivility. Sadly, over the years, I have known many professors whose typical mode of interaction with students comes from a place of power and control, yet these professors are often the ones most frustrated with the uncivil responses they are responsible for creating.

Step 3: Clearly communicate course policies and assignments with rationales and consistently administer consequences

I regularly hear colleagues lament that their syllabi have gone from a few short pages to massive tomes in which they attempt to anticipate every foreseeable student excuse and infraction. Yet an ounce of prevention will avert a ton of student angst when we provide rationales and consequences for assignments and policies. If we don't want students to challenge our grading procedures, a detailed rubric along with a rationale for each assignment will assist students in achieving learning outcomes and go a long way toward preventing student grade challenges after the fact. For example, if we have a policy that students will receive a reduction in points for late assignments, we should provide a policy rationale such as the following: "In order to be fair to students who work to turn in assignments on time, all late papers will lose 5% for each class day they are late." This statement should be prominently displayed on both the course syllabus and the rubric for the assignment. Still, we need to be prepared for students who will approach us with extenuating circumstances and/or excuses. So far this semester my students' hardships have ranged from, "*my husband rejected his kidney transplant*" to "*I had to do my taxes*," and it is only February! Some professors may prefer to make accommodations and exceptions on course policies for certain students. However, no matter the situation and the accompanying level of student angst, we should respond without negative emotion. We can extend sympathy and concern without escalating conflict or compromising course policies.

Step 4: Design courses and utilize methods with the prevention of incivility in mind

I have encountered professors who exhibit a wide range of attitudes and responses regarding specific student behaviors such as texting in class. On one end of the spectrum are professors who don't care if students text in class and who ignore such behaviors; on the other end are those who are so disturbed by student texting that they respond with extremely punitive methods such as having an immediate closed note quiz if they so much as see a cell phone in their classroom. That said, I fear hundreds of you are simultaneously saying to yourselves, "A closed note quiz ... what a great idea!" I want to reiterate: if we are troubled by student behaviors, we need to create and clearly state a policy along with the rationale for the policy and follow through with consequences for those who violate it. However, it has become painfully apparent to me that our methods play a powerful role in contributing to or averting unproductive student behaviors in the classroom. For example, I recently used my *i-clicker* classroom response system to gather a bit of feedback from students regarding their attitudes and texting behaviors. Of the 77 students polled, 18% said they never text in their classes. This was a shockingly low number from my perspective because of my approximately 200 students, I had seen fewer than 5 texting during class and had only two "textaholic" students texting so regularly that I thought it might be disruptive to their learning and those around them. If so many of my students were texting, why weren't they texting in my classes? I found the answer among the remaining 63

students who did report that they texted in their classes. Of these 63 texters, 87% strongly agreed or agreed with the following statement: "I text more in classes in which the professor's main method is lecture and less in those classes in which the professor uses a variety of methods such as discussion, group work, cases, and video or multimedia." Based on our discussions after the survey, it was very clear to me these students were at risk for all types of inattentive behaviors such as texting, surfing, talking, etc. when they were not engaged. In short, if we want to diminish behaviors associated with inattention, our course design and methods matter.

Conclusion

If you peruse the literature on student incivility in the college classroom, you will find a great deal of evidence in support of the recommendations provided here (Boice, 2000; McKeachie, 2006; Meyers, 2003; Weimer, 2002). Communicating clearly and providing a rationale for class policies, creating closeness as opposed to distance when interacting with students, and using engaging methods will not only lessen student incivility, but will help us work toward our ultimate goal of assisting students in achieving learning outcomes as well.

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Chapter 3

A Blueprint for the Future: From Puget Sound to Your Campus

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The Puget Sound Conference

Teaching and learning are difficult and complex tasks. Psychology exists in overlapping social, cultural, political, and educational contexts that shape and perhaps dictate its application. Outside of colleges and universities, life has never been more complex, the foundation of society has never been more seriously questioned, and the tension and conflict between people and between industrial, religious, and racial groups have never been more intense than they are today.

Furthermore, there are now several trends emerging in American higher education such as lower enrollments in many 4-year institutions, students with a wider range of backgrounds and preparations who are demanding more relevant academic curricula and more vocationally oriented training, and increased pressures for monitoring teaching productivity in a time of budgetary restraint.

Wide individual differences can be found among members of a class in general psychology, and it seems that many students have to be taught to read intelligently. Important as the differences in intelligence may be, they are overshadowed by much more important differences in maturity, preparation, interests, and religious, social, and cultural backgrounds. Similarities among students were more common when a college education was limited to a select few, and doubtless the standardized methods of teaching are a relic of those days. There has been pressure in the classroom to depart from standardized lecture formats, to keep the students doing things instead of merely listening, reading, or seeing them done.

These issues complicate the teaching of psychology, but ours is not the first generation to face them. In fact, the first three paragraphs of this essay comprise a set of nearly direct quotations of psychologist teachers between 1910 and 1960 (Beins, 1992). The important issues from the past remain important. What must change is the way we respond to them.

For the past two decades, the 1991 Saint Mary's Conference has influenced the teaching of psychology. The seminal *Handbook for Enhancing Undergraduate Education in Psychology* (McGovern, 1993) from that conference has provided

guidance on a host of pedagogical issues. However, the landscape of higher education has undergone a vast transformation since then.

So, after nearly 20 years and a lifetime of technological and pedagogical evolution, the next generation of educators has charted a course for the 21st century. The National Conference on Undergraduate Education in Psychology took place in June 2008 at University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. Funded by APA, NSF, and other sponsors, a star-studded steering committee of educators led by Diane Halpern issued a competitive call for conference participants. Of more than 200 applicants, the steering committee chose approximately 70 participants who represented different subdisciplines and institution types. The participants formed nine groups, each tasked with writing a book chapter addressing one of the following questions:

- Why do we need to rethink undergraduate education?
- Who is teaching Psychology? (including Quality of Instruction, Staffing Patterns, Rewards, and Training)
- What is being taught and learned in Psychology courses?
- Who are the students in undergraduate Psychology?
- When and where are students taking Psychology courses?
- What are the modes of instruction?
- How can we promote learning with new technologies?
- How are we using new knowledge about teaching and learning?
- What are the desired outcomes of undergraduate education in Psychology?

The final versions of the chapters, along with introductory and closing chapters and associated Quality Principles, appeared in a volume edited by Diane Halpern and published in 2010 by APA, entitled *Undergraduate Education in Psychology: A Blueprint for the Future of the Discipline*. This volume is a guide for educators, programs, departments, and institutions in addressing undergraduate education in psychology in the 21st century. Because the conference and the book are so closely tied, with the ideas discussed in the former put to paper in the latter, we will refer to them jointly here as the *Blueprint* as we discuss some of its themes and context.

Educational Context in the 21st Century

The *Blueprint* was conceived and produced in the midst of a veritable sea change in higher education. Recent and continuing technological developments have not only opened up new options for pedagogies and information gathering, but have, many claim, changed the nature of student learning in the current generation of ‘digital natives’ (Prensky, 2001) - college students who have grown up with computers and related technologies. At the same time, calls for accountability (e.g. U.S. Department of Education, 2006) and integrated learning (e.g., Bok, 2006) have forced colleges to re-examine their general education and major programs. The last decade has also been fraught with economic, environmental, and political concerns that affect the very

core of our functioning as a society, highlighting the need for psychology as a discipline to engage in broader participation in addressing these critical global issues.

Themes of the *Blueprint*

As the week of the Puget Sound conference progressed, it became apparent that there were several points of contact between the discussions of the different groups. As with any dynamic system, the *Blueprint* began to self-organize and develop some emergent properties, or themes, that wove throughout multiple chapters of the book and are reflected in the Quality Principles. What follows is our interpretation of some of these themes.

Facilitating psychological literacy is critical to our educational mission

The term *psychological literacy* represents a multifaceted skill set that allows individuals to use their knowledge of psychology to function well in their personal, professional, and civic lives. Such a skill set can benefit everyone, even those who are not psychology majors. We must remember that many, if not most, of the students we see in our classes will take only one or a few psychology courses while in college. If these students are to become psychologically literate and able to apply the content of psychology to the conduct of their own lives, we need to redouble our efforts to ensure that introductory psychology courses prepare students for the relevant contexts and decisions that they will face throughout their lives.

Science remains the core of psychology

Despite increasing popularity of applied and allied approaches to psychology, our discipline remains firmly grounded in scientific methods and values. An undergraduate degree in psychology should reflect this foundation, and should moreover, according to the *Blueprint*, include training in research methods supported by key areas of the discipline including biological bases, learning and cognition, developmental, and sociocultural domains.

Furthermore, it is critical that students who encounter psychology in only one or two courses recognize that what we know about behavior and mental processes is empirically based. The importance of identifying our discipline as a science is considered so important that the *Blueprint* includes a call for departments to adopt the moniker of Psychological Science.

There is no such thing as one size fits all

Institutions of higher learning vary in their missions and in their structures. As such, the curriculum of psychology can take diverse forms while remaining true to the scientific grounding of the discipline. Programs can put their stamp on the psychology curriculum to reflect the needs and interests of their students. In addition,

rather than advocating for particular pedagogical techniques, the *Blueprint* acknowledges that a myriad approaches can be efficacious and that educators should use instructional techniques that best match the learning goals, student characteristics, and content that apply to the learning context.

We are experiencing a changing landscape of students and technology

Our job in considering how best to engage our students is constantly changing. With the ongoing demographic changes and the rapid technological developments of the 21st century, the nature of our students and their expectations has undergone a revolution. It has become especially important, then, that we adopt a scientist-educator model within our profession.

As scientist-educators who engage in pedagogical scholarship, we can share best practices with each other, reduce the ‘lag time’ in adopting new and effective approaches, and improve student outcomes by finding effective matches between teaching and learning. As teachers, we can use our own psychological literacy to generate and evaluate pedagogical techniques.

Successful education in psychology requires commitment of stakeholders at multiple levels

Although we clearly play a critical role in transforming education in psychology, we cannot transform it on our own. But we can provide an overarching set of principles that guide educators. Consequently, the *Blueprint* ends with a set of Quality Principles that task students, faculty, programs, institutional administrators, and policymakers with taking responsibility for their role in fostering optimal learning outcomes. These Quality Principles further delineate steps that each of these stakeholder groups can (and should) take in working together to achieve the goal of excellence in undergraduate psychology education.

Putting the *Blueprint* to Work

The promise of the *Blueprint* is wasted if we do not heed its call. The conference has concluded, the book is published, and now we must follow up with action. Already, colleagues have reported that the *Blueprint* has been used to inform curriculum development, support departmental advocacy for resources, prompt at least one departmental name change, and develop policy-oriented assignments. Undoubtedly, the *Blueprint* will continue to leave its mark as it supports creative teaching professionals in a wide range of initiatives. We call on each of our colleagues to use the *Blueprint* as a guide in developing best practices and improving student learning in psychology during the coming years.

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Technology for Educators

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Technology changes very quickly, and the signal to noise ratio is very high. As faculty, we don't have a lot of time to seek new ways of interacting with our computer-based information, let alone learn how to use those new tools. This essay introduces a few easy-to-use tools that can help teachers work more efficiently.

Dropbox:

Windows, Linux, Mac, iPhone/Droid apps with an app for Blackberry coming soon

Are you using a flashdrive to tote your files from your office to your classroom and then home? Do you back up your flashdrive or send files to yourself via email? Do you ever worry about losing your flash drive or losing track of which version of a file is most current? Consider Dropbox (<http://dropbox.com>). Imagine having access to your files wherever you are: At home, at work, on your laptop, at the public library, on your smartphone, on a boat, with a goat, in the rain, on a train. You get the idea.

Dropbox adds a folder in the 'My Documents' folder called 'My Dropbox.' Treat it like you would any other folder. Whatever you put in that folder will automatically be uploaded to Dropbox.com and then downloaded to any other computer where you have installed Dropbox. For example, I have it installed on my work computer and my personal laptop. I can also access it on my Droid using the Dropbox app or my phone's web browser. In my classroom, I can visit Dropbox.com and log in to my account to access my files. Dropbox serves as a handy backup. Not only are my files saved in three places (work, home, and on the Dropbox server), Dropbox retains previous versions of files for 30 days.

Another advantage of Dropbox is that I can share individual folders with other people. I have several folders inside my Dropbox folder. By right-clicking on the folder and mousing over 'Dropbox,' I can select 'Share this folder.' This will open my browser to the appropriate page on the Dropbox website. All I need to do is type in the addresses of the people with whom I want to share the folder, and Dropbox will send them invitations. A shared folder acts like a shared drive. Any change I make to a file will automatically be updated on the computers of everyone with whom I'm sharing that folder. When that person makes a change, the file is updated on my computer.

A minor disadvantage of this resource is that only those who install Dropbox are able to share files. While Dropbox makes it easy for others to join and set up Dropbox, some users may resist being ‘forced’ to use a new program.

Xobni (Inbox spelled backwards):
Windows XP, Vista, or 7; Outlook 2003, 2007, or 2010

Xobni is an add-in for Outlook (<http://xobni.com>) that makes managing the onslaught of email much easier. It can help you quickly find email messages, attachments, and contact information for anyone with whom you have ever exchanged emails (Figure 1).

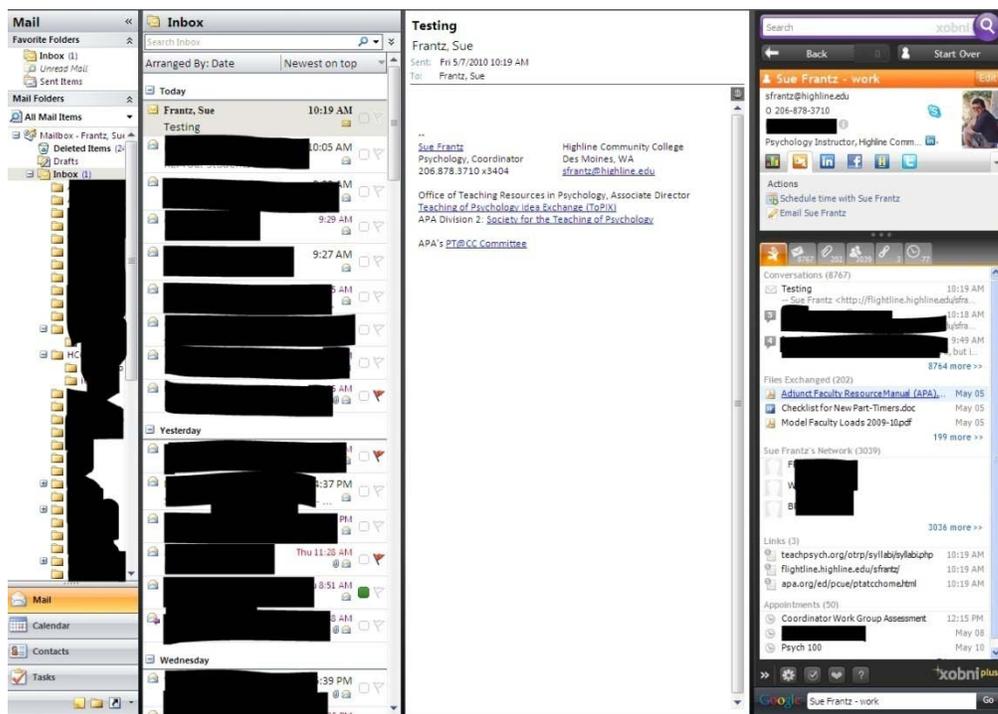


Figure 1: Xobni occupies the fourth column on the screen.

To illustrate how it works, I sent a blank email to myself. When I click on that email, I see the message in the reading pane (third column), and Xobni automatically pulls in whatever information it has collected about me. If I were looking at an email from you, I would see whatever information Xobni has collected about you. At the top you see my work email address. Next are my work and mobile numbers. I can even Skype directly from Xobni. I didn't have to enter any of this information; Xobni pulled it from emails that were sent to and from my Outlook. Where did the photo come from? Facebook. Xobni will show photos for people who use this email for their Facebook account and who have their Facebook photo set as publicly available.

Xobni's true power lies in its indexing of email. If I'm looking at an email you just sent me, I can also see the most recent email conversations we've had, the files we've exchanged, and website URLs we've shared, all of which I can open directly from Xobni. Xobni is also searchable. Typing "Jack" in the search box will locate everyone I've corresponded with who has "Jack" as part of their name. I will also get all the email messages that had "Jack" in the subject line or body of the message, all files exchanged that contain "Jack" in the name of the file, and any appointment that included someone named Jack. If 'Jack' is on the webpage of a URL that I and another person exchanged in an email, Xobni will give me the URL.

When Xobni was first released, it was criticized for slowing down Outlook. Xobni has largely resolved that issue. Outlook may initially take slightly longer to open but then there is no difference in how the program performs and the benefits of Xobni's search capabilities can quickly outweigh this slight delay.

Other Outlook Add-ins

If you live in Outlook, you might also be interested in Simply File (<http://www.techhit.com/SimplyFile>) for quickly filing email messages into folders, EZDetach (<http://www.techhit.com/ezdetach>) for quickly pulling attachments off email messages and saving them to your computer, and Bcc (<http://www.bccthis.com>) which allows you to send one message to one or more people while letting you send an additional comment to one or more additional people. Use bcc to keep someone in the loop while adding additional information for context. It works with Outlook, Gmail, and Blackberry.

Google Reader

How many websites do you visit each day? When do you find time to go into your college library's database to look at what's new in your professional journals? Do you keep checking in with your favorite bloggers to see if they have posted something new? Wouldn't it be nice if someone would just contact you to let you know when there is new content on a web page? RSS feed readers do just that. When you use a feed reader to 'subscribe' to a website, the reader periodically checks that website for new content.

In fact, you probably already have a feed reader. Outlook and Firefox, for instance, both can read RSS feeds. In Outlook, you can find "RSS Feeds" in your "Mail Folders" pane, just above your "Sent Items" folder. In Firefox, they're called "live bookmarks." Many web pages produce RSS feeds - content that is readily readable by RSS feed readers. Many post a sporty little orange icon. Your browser may also display this icon in the address bar to tell you an RSS feed is available. Click the icon to subscribe to the feed.

Google Reader (<http://www.google.com/reader>) is popular because it's web-based rather than residing on your



Figure 2. RSS feed icon.

computer; you can access your personal news feeds on any device that has internet access. I'll discuss how to use Google Reader, but all readers work basically the same way: Subscribe to a news feed. Read the news feed. Here's a one-minute overview courtesy of Google Reader: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSPZ2Uu_X3Y.

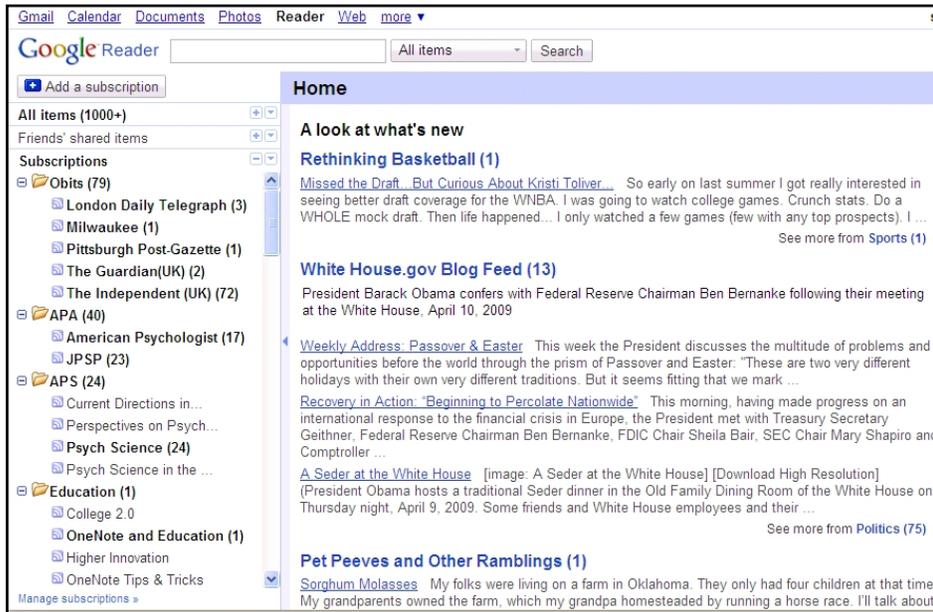


Figure 3. My Google Reader.

In the screenshot, on the left you can see some of the feeds to which I'm subscribed. The ones in bold are the ones with unread content; the number in parentheses tells me how many unread items are in that feed. On the right is content from some of my unread feeds.

Did you know that your library's database has RSS feeds? For instance in Figure 4, I have an "APA" folder that has two APA journals in it. Google Reader retrieves each journal's table of contents giving the title, author, and journal information. Some journals even provide the abstract. Clicking the article title takes me directly to the article in my library's database. A database search can also be an RSS feed. Whenever new content arrives in the database that matches your search criteria, the articles will

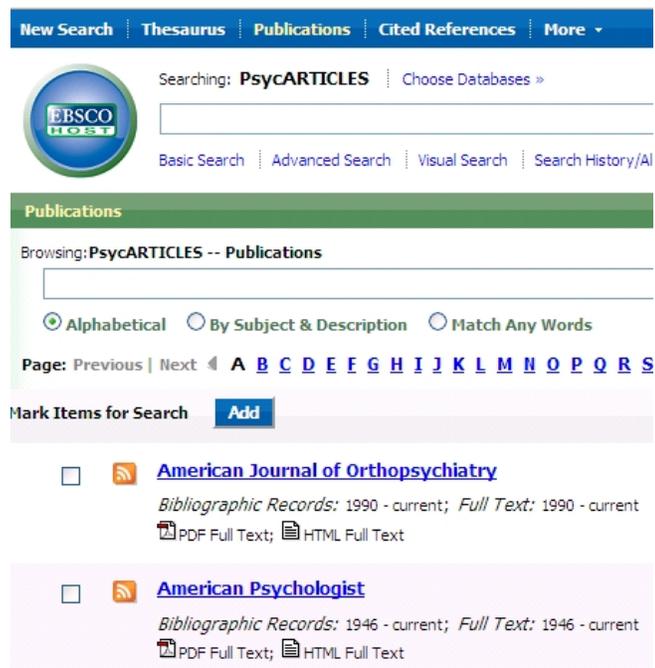


Figure 4. Library databases provide RSS feeds.

appear in your feed reader. To subscribe, visit your library's website, and open your favorite database. Locate the journals, magazines, or newspapers you are interested in and look for the orange RSS icon

In short, an RSS feed reader produces a personalized newspaper. Some people feel compelled to read everything in their news feed and if they don't, they feel guilty. Truly, your RSS feed reader doesn't care if you read it or not. Skim the headlines like you would a newspaper, and read only what you'd like.

Phrase Express: Windows 2000, XP, Vista, or 7

I spend a lot of time typing the same phrases over and over again. When students send me an assignment via email, I reply with a 'got it' message. When I send them their graded assignments, I write a 'your assignment is attached' message. When I grade papers electronically, I find myself typing the same sorts of comments over and over again such as, "Write out numbers that begin sentences." Phrase Express (<http://www.phraseexpress.com>) allows me to use keyboard shortcuts to make such comments.

PhraseExpress works wherever you type text - in email, in Word, in Excel, in your browser's search box. Using whatever combination of key strokes you designate, Phrase Express will automatically enter text, run a program, open a folder or file, do a web search, access your clipboard cache, open a calendar, or enter today's date. If you can do it on your computer, Phrase Express can do it with a shortcut. One downside of this application is that Phrase Express will sometimes behave strangely, such as performing an action with just part of a keyboard shortcut. For example, CTRL-ALT-V will produce a window that lists the last 20 copies I made. In Windows, CTRL-V pastes just the last copy. Sometimes CTRL-V will be enough to cause Phrase Express to show the last 20 copies. Closing and reopening Phrase Express usually resolves the issue.

Conclusion

This essay introduced several computing resources that can help you more easily manage files, email, and information, and can also provide you with shortcuts for common tasks. Resources such as these can enhance your ability to collaborate with colleagues, improve your access to information, and increase your efficiency as you juggle professional responsibilities.

Internationalizing Your Psychology Course

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International Psychology: What It Is and Its Relevance in Teaching Psychology

There are two definitions that I think adequately capture the most relevant aspects of international psychology. First, international psychology is referred to as “an emerging branch of psychology that focuses on the worldwide enterprise of psychology in terms of communication and networking, cross-cultural comparison, scholarship, practice, and pedagogy” (International psychology, 2010). This definition suggests that it can be a distinct area within psychology that one can specialize in, and that it promotes a more global orientation to understanding the human psyche. The second definition describes international psychology as “a science-informed domain that cuts across traditional fields and subsumes an array of pressing global concerns and challenges, including but not limited to intergroup conflict and peace building, environmental degradation and preservation, and risks for and the prevention of physical, and mental illness” (Stevens, 2009, p. 42). This definition illustrates the interdisciplinary and empirically-based nature of international psychology and demonstrates that there are current topics relevant to understanding human behavior and thinking from a global perspective.

Though there are a number of articles that offer ways to internationalize the psychology curriculum (e.g., Bartolini, Gharib, & Phillips, 2009; Boenau, 2007; Hogan, 1996; Marsella, 2007; Stevens & Wedding, 2004; Takooshian, 2004); this essay has a more specific purpose: to offer simple ways for psychology instructors to internationalize the courses they teach.

There are compelling reasons why a growing number of instructors have tried to internationalize their courses in some way. Many aspects of human life continue to become more globally influenced and there is increasing realization in the field that the differences and commonalities in human behavior between cultures around the world can be explained as a function of the contextual and historical variations between nations as cultures evolve. Thus, psychologists have come to value the pursuit of a more global perspective in understanding how individuals behave and think.

Internationalization is also reflected in the mission of many colleges and universities. An international perspective, both in psychology and other disciplines, has increased in recent years because people from all over the world have greater connections with each other. This is the result of factors such as increased travel, telecommunications, geopolitical collaborations and conflicts, cross-national business dealings, environmental concerns, and humanitarian efforts that cross national

boundaries. Internationalization strategies within colleges and universities help students become globally and culturally competent citizens, and provide them with the kind of education that prepares them to function and compete in a more global society. Since most students will likely not have the opportunity to study or work abroad, internationalizing the curriculum through pedagogical strategies employed by course instructors is a viable and potentially cost-effective alternative.

Unfortunately, there is evidence that the existing psychology curriculum in the United States includes little on internationalization (Woolf, Hulsizer, & McCarthy, 2002a, 2002b). There is also an apparent lack of cross-national knowledge, research, and awareness of perspectives about psychology among many of our majors. Instructors tend to encounter roadblocks when they consider incorporating an international perspective in terms of what and how they teach. These roadblocks include but may not be limited to instructors' lack of familiarity with the international literature, lack of institutional financial support for internationalization, and instructors' other work-related obligations. Thus, psychology instructors need specific guidance concerning what they can do to add a more international perspective to their courses.

Before considering strategies, it is wise to know the relevant objectives for internationalizing a psychology course. I suggest reading the report from the APA Working Group on Internationalizing the Psychology Curriculum (APA Task Force on Internationalization the Undergraduate Psychology Curriculum, 2005) as a useful beginning framework. The authors of the report recommended five goals and associated learning outcomes. The five goals address psychological knowledge in international perspective, methodological issues in international research, the discipline of psychology in the international perspective (i.e., awareness of how the discipline of psychology is developed, studied, and applied in and across cultures), psychology and interpersonal understanding, and psychology and global issues. The report also provides suggested student learning outcomes for each goal to assist with course design and for use as a checklist to assess the effectiveness of the strategies at the end of the course.

Simple Strategies Instructors Can Use to Internationalize a Psychology Course

How may a psychology course be internationalized? There are a variety of different ways to go about this, so I offer the following pedagogical strategies that you may employ. Most of these strategies are based on a preliminary analysis of a recent survey that APA Division 52's Curriculum and Training Committee conducted asking its members who teach psychology what have they done to internationalize their courses.

Class Presentations and Lectures

- Have visiting scholars, international students, and study-abroad returnees (and those who have simply traveled and stayed in another country) as classroom resources.

- Show films/videos that enhance an international perspective and critical thinking pertaining to psychological constructs (see Meiners, 2009).
- Adopt critical questioning and cross-national comparisons of psychology as a means of helping students examine and challenge their own assumptions, beliefs, values, and practices from international perspectives (e.g., Students learn that the model they see in the U.S. is not the only possible model and that basic assumptions about the scientific nature of psychology are questioned in some parts of the world).
- Discuss world events and current issues whenever possible; recommend good international news outlets.

Student Activities

- Emphasize active learning activities (e.g., small group discussion, debate, role play, etc.) in teaching about global issues from a psychological perspective.
- Discuss faculty international experiences during class and informally during advising sessions or office hours.
- Facilitate interaction between domestic and international students by providing more opportunities for collaborative student projects and structured activities.
- Encourage students to attend international events (especially psychology conferences) on and off campus. Provide extra credit to students who do attend.

Writing Requirements

- Include contributions of non-U.S. authors on course reading lists and in-class lectures. (e.g., in presenting and discussing the history of a subfield or content area).
- Require students to include and cite international literature in the papers they write. If you prefer this to be optional, give them extra credit but make sure all students are informed of the opportunity.

Utilize the Internet

- Use social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, blogs, wikis, virtual worlds, Blackboard, videoconferencing, etc.) in teaching/training and research work.
- Use internet-based technologies (e.g., e-mails, Websites, podcasts, YouTube videos, videoconferencing, blogs, internet-based research technologies) that promise to be particularly relevant and effective pedagogical devices in internationalizing psychology curriculum (Velayo, Oliva, & Blank, 2008). Presuming that your students are already very familiar with such technology and may find it motivating if these resources are utilized in the course, this may facilitate their readiness to communicate and collaborate with others across geographical regions of the world. For example, a class of students from one institution could “meet” a class of students from an institution in another country via videoconferencing. Blackboard technology could be used to set up

a web-enhanced course that allows for discussions among students from different institutions around the world.

You may even be interested in developing a course on International Psychology. There have only been a handful of university-affiliated instructors that I know of who have done so. I would recommend looking over the syllabus developed by Dr. Michael Stevens of Illinois State University, which is available online at <http://www.psychology.ilstu.edu/mjsteven/PSY326.html>. You will find certain topics he covers to be useful to integrate into your own course. You will also notice that he has a required textbook (Stevens & Gielen, 2007), as well as a set of reproduced book chapters and journal articles drawn from various social science disciplines (e.g., political science, sociology).

Additional Resources

There are abundant resources that can be very useful in incorporating international content into a psychology course but these are not generally available through a single published resource. For those who wish to read more about internationalizing the psychology curriculum, I offer my top 12 recommended resources (listed alphabetically based on authorship) to help you gain more knowledge and develop your own unique approach to internationalizing your courses.

1. APA Task Force on Internationalizing the Undergraduate Psychology Curriculum. (2005). *Report and recommended learning outcomes for internationalizing the undergraduate curriculum*. Retrieved on July 11, 2010 from <http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsServices/cii/current/past/APAFinalACEReportjtp.doc>

[This document recommends five relevant goals and associated learning outcomes for internationalizing the undergraduate psychology curriculum in the United States.]

2. *International Journal of Psychology* (2006, Volume 41, Issue 1).

This special issue of the journal published on behalf of the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS) features the topic on “International Practices in the Teaching of Psychology” with guest editors, Victor Karandashev and Sherri McCarthy.

3. *International Psychology Information Clearinghouse*. Retrieved on July 11, 2010 from <http://www.internationalpsychology.net/resources/>

[This 100+ page comprehensive listing of relevant resources has been compiled by Michael Stevens, PhD (Professor of Psychology at Illinois State University) and made accessible on the website of APA’s Division of International Psychology. It contains general resources - accessible via the web or in print form - including career information, international psychology organizations, work opportunities for academic, research, and clinical settings, potential funding sources for US and non-US instructors

and students, books, articles, syllabi, conference presentations, and many other resources.]

4. McCarthy, S., Newstead, S., Karandashev, V., Prandini, C., Hutz, C., & Gomes, W. (Eds.) (2007). *Teaching psychology around the world, Volume 1*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

[This book provides an overview of teaching psychology internationally by incorporating research and perspectives from psychologists in more than 30 countries. It also includes relevant information for secondary, undergraduate, and post-graduate psychology programs.]

5. McCarthy, S., Karandashev, V., Stevens, M., Thatcher, A., Jaafar, J., Moore, K., Trapp, A., & Brewer, C. (Eds.) (2009). *Teaching psychology around the world, Volume 2*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

[This book includes current information on the teaching and practice of psychology collected by experts in the field throughout the world. It is highly recommended by prominent U.S. psychologists. One of the chapters from this book that you may find useful is by Meiners (2009) titled “Viewing films to build ‘global competence’: A case study.”]

6. Woolf, L. M., Hulsizer, M. R., & McCarthy, T. (2002a). *International psychology: A compendium of textbooks for selected courses evaluated for international content*. Retrieved July 15, 2010 from

<http://www.teachpsych.org/otrp/resources/resources.php?category=International%20Psychology>

[This electronic resource contains a compilation of information on textbooks in introductory, social, and lifespan developmental psychology which have been evaluated for international content. It includes comparative tables (amount of international coverage per textbook and per chapter, total number of chapters, number and gender of authors, etc.), plus narrative reviews of each of the textbooks given these three content areas.]

7. Woolf, L. M., Hulsizer, M. R., & McCarthy, T. (2002b). *International psychology: Annotated bibliography, relevant organizations, and course suggestions*. Retrieved July 15, 2010 from

<http://www.teachpsych.org/otrp/resources/resources.php?category=International%20Psychology>

[This contains a diverse set of resources including sample syllabi, annotated bibliographies, and video suggestions to help you incorporate international content into selected existing courses. It may also be useful to those who wish to develop a course on international psychology.]

8. Pawlik, K., & d'Ydewalle, G. (2006). *Psychological concepts: An international historical perspective*. Hove, UK: Psychology Press.

[This book provides an international perspective on each of the core psychological concepts, describing and analyzing them from a historical point of view. Authors from 11 countries and 4 continents, all distinguished in their respective research areas, contributed to the 14 chapters.

9. Stevens, M. J., & Wedding, D. (Eds.). (2004). *Handbook of International Psychology*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.

[This book chronicles the evolution of psychology in different world regions for the purpose of reducing the ethnocentric nature of the western psychology. Each chapter follows a uniform outline, unifying the volume as a whole, but allowing for the cultural diversity and status of psychology in each country.]

10. Stevens, M. J., & Gielen, U. P. (Eds.). (2007). *Toward a global psychology: Theory, research, interventions, and pedagogy*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

[This book is a thorough review of the existing literature on international psychology from around the world and provides the knowledge needed to successfully engage in the science and practice of psychology in an increasingly globalized society. It provides an overview of conceptual models, research methodologies, interventions, and pedagogical approaches related to international psychology

11. Wedding, D. & Stevens, M. J. (2009). *Psychology: IUPsyS global resources*. [CD-ROM (8th ed.)]. Hove, UK: Psychology Press.

[This resource contains a set of tools covering all aspects of psychology around the world. New material is added to this CD-ROM and existing sections are updated and/or expanded annually.]

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Advising Dilemmas: Difficult Messages and Strategies for Delivering Them

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Advising interactions provide opportune teaching moments. Advisees arrive with questions, goals, and uncertainties in hand. Although their investment in the advice received will vary, there is great potential for advisees to receive new information and to correct misinformation. Faculty interest in these teaching moments also varies. Ware (1993) observed that “although theory, research, and practical applications permeate the advising literature, most academic psychologists appear relatively uninterested in advising-related activities and outcomes” (p. 47). This stems in part from advising taking time away from classroom teaching, research endeavors, and service activities. But we believe that advising dilemmas also impact such attitudes. By “advising dilemmas,” we mean those moments when an advisee’s question or situation requires a response that both parties are likely to experience as undesirable or unpleasant. Often the advisor feels a pull to deliver bad news, provide a reality check, or confront problematic behavior or thinking.

Our goal in this essay is to shed light on common advising dilemmas in an attempt to normalize the difficulty faculty experience in confronting them and provide action steps for advisors seeking to improve the outcomes. To accomplish this, we first consider the culture of advising and several contextual factors for advising interactions. We then examine three common advising dilemmas and offer practical strategies for successfully addressing them. We conclude by attending to several broad, department level issues that impact the specific advising dilemmas faculty encounter.

Advising Culture and Context

Several elements of the advising culture parallel that of patients and providers in the medical community. Prominent among these is advisees’ tendency to consult multiple sources of information (e.g., websites, institution catalog, instructors, peers) prior to meeting with an advisor. Although informed advisees are desirable, problems emerge when they are more invested in the advisor confirming their self-assessments and plans than offering expert, objective guidance.

Because faculty react to the advising situation in diverse ways, second opinions are of value. Faculty differ in terms of their knowledge of issues critical to student success (e.g., university policies, trends in a subfield) and approaches to advising. For example, prescriptive advisors address the specific tasks and questions at hand whereas developmental advisors are concerned with students' broader growth (Crookston, 1972, reprinted 1994; Appleby 2001). The former "treats" the primary symptom while the later "treats" the entire student.

Like physicians who avoid discussing diet, substance use, and exercise, some faculty are so uncomfortable addressing students' grades, study habits, and classroom behavior that they simply fail to do it. Still others proceed by conceptualizing the task as difficult in the moment but ultimately in the student's best interest. Like patients fearful of receiving bad news from a physician, many advisees avoid advising altogether or skirt difficult topics. Others attempt to negotiate things beyond the advisor's control. They may argue that a particular course requirement in the major is unjustified or that a graduate program of interest is being unfair in using its minimum GRE requirement. Still other advisees deny the realities advisors present, such as the impossibility of raising an established GPA beyond a certain point.

It is important that advisors also recognize key contextual factors in advising dilemmas such as the dramatic changes to the employment situation for young college graduates. In his article *The Lost Generation*, Coy (2009) identifies several troubling trends. For example, in September of 2009 only 46% of 16-24 year olds had jobs - the lowest percentage on record since WWII. Advisees' fears related to unemployment, lack of insurance, and homelessness are likely increasing. The tight job market may also increase the number of alumni requesting advising. Students whose employment or graduate school plans were thwarted may contact a previous advisor for assistance.

Another contextual factor is highlighted by the attention recently given to the for-profit education industry. Media coverage of some students' negative experiences and the profit margins of some institutions has helped spur congressional inquiries into potential wastes of federal student aid (Field, 2010). As the number of graduate degrees offered by such institutions grows, advisors will face the issue of how to best help students evaluate the quality and costs of these programs independent from their likelihood of acceptance and the program's claims.

Common Dilemmas and Strategies for Responding

Faculty members face a variety of dilemmas when working with advisees. One common advising dilemma arises when students' math and writing skills are inadequate. These advisees often express strong dislike for fundamental aspects of the major. For example, Advisee X says he is taking the research methods course a third time despite his disdain for numbers and writing. His transcript reflects poor grades in related courses and low SAT scores. Despite his anguish, he repeatedly asserts that he will pass the course this time. In this situation, it is incumbent upon the advisor to not collude with the student in ignoring his skill deficits and instead commit to questioning

his past performance. Advisees often avoid this conversation by attributing previous struggles to external factors, and too often advisors accept this in order to avoid direct confrontation. This dilemma also demands a frank discussion about the nature of the major and field. Such skills deficits have immediate relevance to success in courses and long-term relevance to success in graduate school and careers (Appleby, 2001). This dilemma is a proverbial fork in the road. Many advisees in this position would be well served by an advisor who engages in an honest conversation about what other majors might be better suited to the students' skills and interests.

A second advising dilemma involves students who overestimate their chances of getting into graduate school. For example, Advisee X says, "I know I have a 480 Verbal GRE score and a 3.2 GPA, but I'm positive I will get into X clinical Ph.D. program." In this situation, it is important that the advisor first question her reasons for applying and the logic behind her confidence. Such advisees often need assistance to separate desire, or motivation, to attend graduate school from the ability to successfully complete it. Advisors are best equipped to address this dilemma when they understand: 1) the different types of programs that exist (e.g., clinical scientist vs. scientist practitioner), 2) the relative importance of application components, and 3) recent admissions statistics (for example resources, see Lawson, 1995; Norcross, Kohout, & Wicherski, 2005). Being armed with this information moves the advice and guidance advisors provide outside of opinion or personal experience and into the realm of empirical evidence. Advisors can also direct students to resources available for navigating the application process (e.g., American Psychological Association, 2009; Keith-Spiegel & Wiederman, 2000; Norcross, Sayette, & Mayne, 2008).

A third advising dilemma occurs when weak students request letters of recommendation. These advisees often begin their request by acknowledging some deficit they assume might normally prohibit a letter, such as inadequate qualifications for graduate school, limited interactions with the advisor, and/or needing the letter on short notice. Unlike other advising activities, this dilemma involves a request for the advisor's formal evaluation of the advisee. As a result, faculty should explore the costs and rewards of their decision. The advisee's welfare must be considered (e.g., Will he or she be well served by attending the program?). The welfare of the graduate program should also be considered (e.g., Would the advisee be an asset or liability to the program when working with mentors, serving clients, or teaching students?). After considering these issues, advisors should recognize they have multiple options for responding to a student's request. They can say "yes" knowing that the letter will be strong, or they can say "yes" but explain to the advisee what limits them from writing a strong letter. Advisors also can say "no" knowing the letter would not be strong enough, or they can say "no" and talk with the student about how this situation can be addressed to ensure a strong letter in the future.

Conclusion

Advising dilemmas like those discussed above may recur in part due to the persistence and prevalence of certain advising cultural and contextual factors.

Individual advisors can do much to enhance their effectiveness and comfort in dealing with these dilemmas. Yet in addition to the expansion of advisors' knowledge and skills, it is important to attend to departmental-level concerns and decisions that impact advisors and advisees. For example, as advisors and departments consider advising dilemmas, decisions must be made regarding who is best equipped to address these challenges and where the limited resources are best applied. Some departments utilize advising specialists (faculty or staff) who have expertise and interest in working with larger numbers of advisees. If faculty alone carry the responsibility for advising, the time required must be evaluated in light of other responsibilities. How advising resources are prioritized among prospective, current, and former students should also be determined.

Some advising dilemmas can be reduced by clearly communicating to students the identity of the major and expectations for those pursuing it. Departments could offer a pre-major orientation or require a course on the psychology major and related careers. Standards for entering and remaining in the major can also be established and enforced. Struggling students can be more proactively engaged through intervention advising designed to directly address their problems and devise remedies. Advanced students can be assisted by offering workshops on preparing for post-degree plans or having departmental policies on situations that are often handled inconsistently across advisors (e.g., letters of recommendation, qualifications for research assistants).

Dilemmas contribute to perceptions that advising can be one of the most challenging of a faculty members' responsibilities. By developing an appreciation for the normalcy of such impasses and utilizing strategies for addressing them, advisors can begin to transform more of these dilemmas into teaching moments.

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The Vacuity of Positive Thinking: A Century of Pop Psychology

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In many of our classes we leave out entirely much of the stuff that students, prior to arriving in our classrooms, thought was part of the field of psychology. However, teaching students enough about the history of pop psychology to understand why we don't devote much attention to it is quite worth the effort. Perhaps it would be best to begin with a definition: While books from actual psychological scientists frequently do well in the marketplace, the term "pop psychology" is generally reserved for works by academic outsiders submitting their ideas and advice directly to the public rather than undergoing the peer-review process of academic journals. While the science of psychology emphasizes replicable empirical evidence, much of pop psychology is devoted to simplistic advice and the uncritical repetition of already widely-held beliefs, common sense, and religious advice, retooled with psychological jargon to sound contemporary and scientific.

Just as I structure my History and Systems course around a set of themes, recurring ideas, and conflicts (free will vs. determinism, nativism vs. empiricism, mental phenomena vs. behavior), I have also found a unifying theme for pop psychology. The theme is that pop psychology has only ever really had one idea - an idea best described, to borrow from Norman Vincent Peale, as *The Power of Positive Thinking* (more on him later). There have been many variations on this theme but like any good musical composition, pop psychology (and pop theology too, for that matter) keeps restating the original theme.

The first successful and influential implementation of this idea in the modern era occurred at the hands of Mary Baker Eddy, who established the Church of Christ, Scientist in 1879 - the same year as the founding of Wundt's laboratory. Eddy was a pioneer of the approach of providing unsupported health advice and religious guidance wrapped in the trappings of the new science of psychology. A foundational principle of Christian Science is Eddy's notion that all illness is ultimately an illusion. The appearance of illness is actually caused by faulty beliefs, and the sick can therefore be healed via prayer which works by replacing bad thoughts with good ones (which *almost* sounds like cognitive behavior therapy).

Baker's basic text, *Science and Health: With a Key to the Scriptures*, was first published in 1875. Based on Eddy's writings, Christian Science practitioners work by essentially arguing the patient out of being sick. In the modern version, these

consultations don't always occur in person: Healing can ostensibly be accomplished over the telephone, by mail, and possibly even via e-mail. Consultation with a practitioner is not always necessary, as the sick person may also be able to self-heal through prayer and concentration.

In a history and systems course, Eddy's story can be integrated with a discussion of the early days of hypnosis, as her central insight can be traced to an 1862 visit to a doctor who used Mesmer's ideas—he claimed to manipulate the flow of magnetic fluid in her body using actual magnets along with his own animal magnetism. Eddy decided, correctly, that the magnets had nothing to do with her recovery. She instead credited Jesus Christ with the healing and decided that all illness could and should be treated in this way.

Eddy's book was so successful that she founded a church to promote her ideas, which grew to a membership of nearly 270,000 by World War II. Over the years, the church's membership has declined precipitously (the most recent estimate I could find places membership at around 30,000 as of 1991), probably due in part to the difficulty of sustaining its basic teachings in the face of modern medicine. Ms. Eddy did have one insight that modern psychology largely confirms: A patient's mental status and beliefs can influence the effectiveness of a treatment, though it isn't the actual cause of most illness.

In 1952, Norman Vincent Peale, a Protestant minister who oversaw a 5000-member congregation in Manhattan, published one of pop psychology's perennial bestsellers: *The Power of Positive Thinking* - a book that remains in print today having sold more than seven million copies. Though it remains his best-known book, it was actually the culminating event of a career in which he had already devoted considerable attention to blending his ministry with psychological ideas. Peale's basic technique for overcoming any adversity in life involves repeating positive affirmations over and over again until they sink into the unconscious mind and are internally repeated automatically. The central idea is that if you repeat positive things about yourself, you will come to believe them. The repetition is necessary in order to defeat the conscious will, which Peale asserts is unreliable and troublesome. Peale teaches that by giving up control to the unconscious, the individual gains access to the power of God - a portion of which has been placed in all of us. The person who believes that he or she possesses this power can proceed to do great things. In other words, thinking positive things will cause positive things to happen, and negative thoughts will cause negative things to happen. This remarkably durable idea sustained Peale through a long list of additional books, including:

- *The Power of Positive Thinking for Young People* (1954)
- *The Art of Real Happiness* (1956)
- *The Amazing Results of Positive Thinking* (1959)
- And (inevitably, given the publishing business) *Sin, Sex, and Self-Control* (1965).

The central idea of these books has cast a long shadow, with many (most?) other pop psychology authors freely borrowing from Peale.

A similar philosophy, presented from a non-religious, business-friendly perspective, was popularized by Dale Carnegie (1888-1955), author of the huge-selling *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936) which remains in print and is quite popular today. He is best-known for teaching people to overcome their fear of public speaking and other anxiety-provoking situations, along with (self-evidently) how to win friends and influence people. Carnegie's central principle is simply that it is possible to change other people's behavior by changing how we think about and react to them. If that sounds familiar it's because like those before him, he focused on the notion that thinking positively will produce desired results. By the time of Carnegie's death, *How to Win Friends...* had sold a remarkable 5 million copies in at least 31 languages and it continues to sell briskly today. This almost certainly makes him the all-time sales champion among pop psychology authors.

To self-help guru Tony Robbins, sales like Dale Carnegie's are unimpressive given the other ways Robbins has found to influence world events. Robbins has become so widely-respected that he was actually invited to a secret meeting at Camp David by U.S. President Bill Clinton in 1994. In his book *Awaken the Giant Within*, Robbins recounts meetings with Mikhail Gorbachev, Margaret Thatcher, François Mitterrand, and Nelson Mandela. Given the prominence of those who have listened, the actual message is depressingly familiar: Think more positively about what you do, and you will accomplish all your goals.

Tony Robbins has a gift for titles: He promises to help seminar attendees/readers achieve *Unlimited Power* (1986). He also promises to *Awaken the Giant Within* (1992), presumably in preparation for taking *Giant Steps* (1994). In his *Unleash the Power Within* seminar, participants learn to overcome their fears by walking across hot coals after which they are presumably less afraid to try things they previously believed impossible. Firewalking doesn't actually require any special training or preparation as long as it is done properly, but most participants do not believe at first that they will be able to do it. The seminar focuses on learning to overcome internal resistance to trying new things. In learning to expect that they will accomplish more, via a process Robbins terms neuroassociative conditioning, participants are assimilating a message that once again sounds remarkably like Peale's power of positive thinking.

The latest author to borrow and expand on Peale's central idea is Rhonda Byrne, Australian reality-TV producer and author of the 2006 pop-culture phenomenon known as *The Secret*. *The Secret* is no mere book: It is actually intended as a companion piece to the popular DVD by the same title. The book presents nothing new. Once again, positive thoughts cause positive things to happen and negative thoughts cause negative things to happen. Byrne does have a new name for this, however: The Law of Attraction. Essentially the universe wants us to be happy and if we think hard about the things we want, we attract them to ourselves. Given that this is the central idea of a book published by Peale in 1952, Byrne's title is somewhat baffling—the strategy has hardly been a secret. Thanks to massive television exposure however, more than half a million copies of the DVD had been sold as of late 2007 and the book topped the *New York Times* bestseller list.

In both the movie and the book, the presentation of the law of attraction is simplistic and sensational. In one segment a child who really wants a new bicycle cuts out a picture of it, concentrates hard, and is subsequently rewarded for his efforts by receiving a bicycle. Of course his attainment of his goal is presented as having nothing to do with generous adults who are aware of his desire – he obtained it purely as a result of his own positive thinking which is now labeled with new, improved jargon. Positive thinking has now become “creative visualization.”

The book and film focus largely on the positive idea that people have control over their own lives and can have whatever they want. There is a dark side to this philosophy, however—some portions of the book appear to suggest, among other things, that the only reason people are made ill by communicable diseases is that they believe germs can make them sick and that only those who believe in cancer can be harmed by it. This recycles old ideas in another way, sounding remarkably like Christian Science with a twist: Maybe people (including children) who are dying of terrible diseases have nobody to blame but themselves.

The history of scientific psychology has run in parallel with the far better-publicized, bigger-selling world of pop psychology. Ironically, some of the central ideas of pop psychology sound like stripped-down versions of well-established scientific concepts. Central to cognitive-behavioral therapy, an effective evidence-based treatment for such conditions as depression, is changing the patient's negative thoughts to positive ones. There's more to the process than mere positive thinking however, and effective treatment is usually attributed to the power of reinforcement schedules rather than deities. Where genuine psychology offers explanations that as products of science are complicated, tentative, and constantly subject to revision, pop psychology has given people what they want: A simplistic, one-size-fits-all solution to all of life's problems. The universe wants you to be happy and wealthy, and achieving those ends requires only believing that you will. Small wonder that they sell many more books than we do.

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To Customize or Not to Customize? Benefits and Disadvantages

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Instructors are frequently solicited through e-mails or sales representatives to custom edit a textbook. There is little information available to instructors, however, about this process. Based on our experiences custom editing a general psychology textbook on three separate occasions, this essay discusses advantages and disadvantages to custom editing, as well as factors to consider in making the decision. Included are some practical suggestions for the process.

Benefits of a Custom Textbook

There are a number of major advantages to a custom text. First, there is the potential to lower the cost to the student. In some cases, the cost of a custom text can be less than half of a traditional book. Second, a custom text allows for the inclusion of university and department specific material. A custom text also allows the instructor to create a streamlined book more suitable for a one semester course without sacrificing depth. (Frequently shorter books tend to sacrifice depth for breath.) For our department, one of the most beneficial aspects of the custom text has been the ability to add handouts and worksheets for the students. These handouts and worksheets allow students to apply and practice concepts, and have been edited to include local examples. The handouts also can include review sheets and material not covered in the text, and can be incorporated into classes as either homework or in-class activities. Having this information included in the text not only saves considerable time in passing out material for large sections, but it also ensures that students have the material whether they are in class or not.

Disadvantages of a Custom Textbook

Although there are significant advantages to a custom text, a major disadvantage is the extensive time required in selecting and editing the book. The first version of our custom text was done over an almost 2 year period. The actual editing of the book is time consuming and done within a rigid timeline. The editing process includes making many decisions about the custom text. The initial consideration is to determine how much customizing is desired. Custom textbooks vary from those which differ little from the original to those that are extensively edited and include new

material. At our university, general psychology is a “general education” requirement, so that was one of the guiding principles in determining what information to include. There also were decisions regarding the format of the book that had to be made. We found having a price point for the cost of the book (e.g., keeping the book less than \$50) was helpful in making the decisions.

In addition to the time requirements, there are some practical disadvantages to a custom text. Some of the university or department material can become dated. To handle this problem, in the text, our students are directed to a website that can frequently update links and instructions. Also, our custom book is meant to be a “one time” use book, which results in the students not being able to sell their books back at the university bookstore (this is one reason for our lower selected price point). Students do buy second hand books, but the books are frequently missing required material. Having a book on reserve at the library, however, and encouraging students to copy the material they are missing has helped with this problem.

Factors to Consider

In deciding to do a custom text, there are a number of factors to consider. First, it is important to determine your goals and your purposes for custom editing. For example, is your goal to improve an existing text by including additional material? Is your primary goal to edit an existing text to be more compatible with course and university goals, or is your primary goal to reduce cost to students (if this is a goal, what is the price point?). Having clear goals and purposes will help in making many of the decisions that will follow.

A second factor to consider is whether you have the time and commitment to work on a custom text. Depending upon how much editing is done, and how much original material is added, custom editing can be a time consuming process. It is important to consider whether you can meet the stated deadlines and whether you will be available when the book needs to be proofed (final proofing may be in the summer).

Third, it is important to take into account whether there is support for this project. Is there going to be support from the department chair and the university (e.g., release time, secretarial or graduate assistant support)? Are there university policies and legal issues that need to be considered? Legal issues need to be addressed at various stages of the process. Indeed, it is advisable to consider legal issues before even beginning the process. It also is important to assess whether other faculty members are willing to work on the book and use the book for the length of the adoption.

A fourth factor to think about concerns royalty. Will there be a royalty associated with the custom text (if yes, how much per book)? Once that decision is made, the next set of decisions concerns who will receive the royalty (e.g., individuals, department, or university). If the royalties go to the department, it is important to consider how the funds will be used. In our department, a committee makes the

decision. Finally, it is important to explore whether there are relevant legal and university policies concerning royalties.

A fifth factor to address involves how much customizing you want to do to the book. Custom editing can range from very little change to almost rewriting a book. A primary issue to consider is how much you want to change the basic text (e.g., keep all chapters or delete some; edit the individual chapters themselves; add content material). You next need to consider whether you want to add original/department specific material. There are at least four different types of material that can be added. First, there is material that is specific to your university and its policies. Second, there is departmental material (e.g., information about the department, research pool, faculty) that can be added. Third, there is discipline specific material (e.g., information about careers in psychology). Finally, there is course specific material (e.g., homework assignments, handouts to be used in class).

A final factor to consider is how you want to format the book. For example, do you want an E-book or a traditional book? If it is a traditional book, do you want a hard or soft cover, bound or loose-leaf, one time or multiple use? If material is removed from the original text, do you want it repaginated? Do you want the book in black or white or in color? Having a clear goal for your custom text will help in making these decisions. For example, if keeping cost down for the student is a goal, you can explore the cost of these options.

Outline of Process

1. Initial exploratory meetings and work
 - a) Meet with other course instructors to discuss interest and concerns
 - b) Meet with department chair to gauge university support
 - c) Identify publishers with appropriate products and experience
 - d) Examine other custom textbooks
 - e) Establish a clear purpose and goals for the custom text
 - f) Decide how much and what to do with any royalty
 - g) Contact university legal department about issues and university policy regarding a custom textbook
2. Selection of book to be customized
 - a) Narrow down books based on content and quality
 - b) Develop a list of questions for publishers to answer in written form (please contact the authors for a list of questions)
 - c) Have publishers submit formal proposals
 - d) Set up presentations by publishers and their technology staff.
 - e) Check references (Contact other professors/departments who customized with the potential editors)
 - f) Select the final book

3. Working on the custom text
 - a) Establish a timeline with editor
 - b) Meet with other instructors to decide what to include in the textbook and who will do the work
 - c) If desired, develop original material for the book
 - d) If needed, publisher will have to obtain permission to include copyrighted material
 - e) Edit the book to be consistent (e.g., if parts of a chapter were removed, the introduction to chapter and end of the chapter material may need to be revised)
 - f) Make final decisions about the book
 - g) Address legal issues: review of contract by university lawyers
4. Submit all edited material to custom editor
5. Proof copy and answer questions from editor
6. Monitor distribution and delivery dates

Lessons Learned

In going through this process, we learned a number of lessons. It is important to allow plenty of time, especially for the initial custom project. We also learned that it works best for this to be a collaborative effort, not only because of the amount of work involved, but also because of the proofing, attention to detail and organizational skills required. It is difficult for one person to “catch” everything and keep up with all the details. We also learned important lessons on the “business” side of custom editing. Get **everything** in writing ahead of time such as the cost of book, date of delivery, and date of next revision. This will help prevent any later misunderstandings. Related to this, it is important to be prepared with questions for publishers and book reps and to request written answers to these questions. Because of the amount of time you will be spending with the person, it is extremely important to select a custom editor who is easy to work with as well as competent. On the positive side, we learned that some of our initial fears about the custom text did not materialize. For example, we learned that loose-leaf books work well. Students don’t usually lose the pages, and the format works well for the use of handouts. Overall, despite the time and effort required, we found the development of a custom text to be a worthwhile project.

Author Note

This essay was adapted from a poster presented at the annual convention of the American Psychological Association, San Diego, CA (2010, August).

On Blogging about Teaching Psychology

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I write a blog. This essay, which is written like most of my blogs (only longer--sorry), is a short history of how and why I blog, as well as a bit of a user's manual for interested readers who might want to take to the 'net to share their passion for psychology with the world (wide web). I asked the editors to sanction the writing style here, which is different than the other writing I do and distinct from the typical essays that appear in the E-xcellence series. But we are talking about blogging here, so the usual niceties don't apply (as much).

I was a reluctant blogger. I never subscribed to a blog (and still don't). I never followed a blogger. I am old fashioned, content to read a daily newspaper at sunrise rather than to prowling the Internet's avenues for news. To be truthful, aside from being amused by the blog-as-plot device in the book *Julie & Julia* (Powell, 2009), I never gave blogs much thought. And when I did so, my reflections were probably accompanied by an appropriate dose of doubt or derision because I am convinced our contemporary culture (including the academic culture of psychology) is already rife with a bit too much narcissism. Why encourage more, especially my own?

But, as we all know, life can be strange as well as complex. So perhaps it comes as little surprise that a gentle slide into hypocrisy is inevitable when loosely formed attitudes (mine) confront the opportunity to give a maligned thing a whirl (an invitation to blog). Here's how it all started: In early August 2009 a *Psychology Today* (PT) magazine editor asked me if I would be willing to write a blog on teaching psychology. I demurred and suggested others who might be better qualified as I was (truthfully and always) overcommitted on several fronts. And anyway, I was also about to begin a daunting year as President of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology. Where and when would I find the time to blog when I was already stressing about working my way through a now-even-longer than usual to-do list? "Exactly why you will be perfect," the wily and hip young editor replied. "Just write a draft blog entry of 700 words or so and see if you like doing it--it won't take any time at all--you'll see."

And here we are. I've been writing a blog on the teaching of psychology (listed as "*Head of the Class: How to Teach Psychology Well*") for PT since late August 2009 (go to: <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/head-the-class> to view recent and archived entries). I am one of PT's many bloggers, and I submit a new entry every 3 weeks or so. I view my blogging as a way to bring teaching issues, new pedagogies, and other related matters to the attention of people who probably have not been in a classroom, let alone a psychology course, for quite some time. I write about topics that occur to me when I am teaching, issues (often angst-ridden) my students raise in class

or their written work, select current events from the newspaper that cry out for psychological comment, the occasional pedagogical triumph or insight (both all too rare in my teaching life, alas), and, naturally, the occasional frustration associated with some aspect of teaching or higher education more generally. In short, I get to write about whatever I feel like writing about in my blog.

So, in spite of my initial trepidation, I do enjoy writing my teaching blog. Besides pointing out the benefits, however, I need to be equally candid about the accompanying challenges. I thought that I might spend the rest of this article outlining both sets of issues so that would-be bloggers (i.e., you) can decide whether blogging on teaching, psychology, or other matters has any appeal. Let's begin with an obvious challenge:

Time. There is never enough and doing a blog on a regular schedule (I could never commit to writing daily or even sporadic entries) takes time away from other duties. So, unless you are currently under committed in your career, realize that this is one more responsibility requiring attention. Certainly, a lone blogger in the wilds of the web can register opinions when the spirit moves her, but where there is some editorial oversight involved (however freewheeling it may be), entries should (must) arrive on a reasonable schedule. I am routinely surprised at how quickly three weeks passes and I need to produce an entry once more.

But on the up-side, it is a writing exercise. I like to stretch my writing muscles all the time, which is why I try to do different sorts of writing—everything from books and articles to book reviews and, well, blogs. In my experience, trying different types of writing allows you to be comfortable expressing your thoughts on a keyboard. Learning to “write on demand” also means that you can learn to write quickly. Speed is a good thing for doing a blog. I usually write a draft of my entry on a Tuesday morning and then post it later the same day or early the next one. I was not quick when I began, but experience led to comfort. I like to hope this form of writing will have a positive impact on some of my other writing ventures.

You still need to edit what you say. The spontaneity of blogging aside, I always edit my blog for spelling and punctuation, as well as style and clarity. If you are writing about teaching or other educational issues, you want to be taken seriously. If you are not already a compulsive editor of your own work, developing this quality is a good idea before you decide to post your wares (i.e., your ideas) on the Internet. Blogging is not like regular publishing in psychology where an editor, peers, and usually a copyeditor go over (let's be honest—improve) your prose before it appears in print. When blogging, you work without such safety nets so that any typos or other errors loom larger than those you might make in, say, an entry on your *Facebook* page (as a clumsy typist, I know whereof I speak).

What about writer's block? The blog must go on—at least that's how I approach my blogging. I stick to my three week schedule, which means that even if inspiration does not strike I still have to log an entry on something. So, I ask my wife to suggest possible topics, I ask friends and colleagues for leads, and I consult the running list of ideas I keep for such emergencies (although what seemed like a good idea when originally feverishly jotted down rarely seems interesting to me later). Eventually, I hit

on something I can write about and my worry about having nothing to say recedes until the next entry has to be done.

Who are you writing for, anyway? Ah, we're back to narcissism: Ultimately, you are writing for you (and possibly about you, too). By that I mean that the topic of a blog entry is something that spurred you to reflection and commentary. Of course, you are also writing for some other audience—in my case, I hope to speak to people who are interested in teaching issues in psychology and psychology more generally—but you never know who is going to read your entry. So, in a way, you are writing to please yourself: Your message must be one that resonates with your interests, concerns, and passions. Otherwise, why blog when there are other venues for sharing your ideas and often in much greater detail?

The great unknowns. One thing I really do like about writing a blog is that you never know who is going to read your work and respond to it. Sometimes entries that I slaved over garner no reaction at all, while a few of those that I wrote quickly to meet my deadline so that I could move on to some other pressing task triggered genuine and friendly intellectual give and take. You just never know. And, in the interests of candor, sometimes you receive less-than-friendly responses to what you share, a not surprising reality that goes with territory of blogging.

Be brief and be gone. Words to live and write by. My friend, the teacher and sage, Charles Brewer, urges this adage on public speakers introducing others or simply sharing their thoughts aloud in front of an audience. With a little adjustment it applies beautifully to blogging; one big message per entry is ideal. Any more than that and you have an essay, which is a more carefully crafted and less spontaneous message, not what readers of blogs want. So, brevity is highly desirable trait of the blogger, one I have violated a bit in this piece. I hope you will forgive me, just as I hope that my observations on web logs (aka blogs) will be helpful to you.

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