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## A Follow-Up Note on Graduate Training in the Teaching of Introductory Psychology

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*This note extends a previous report (Rickard, Prentice-Dunn, Rogers, Scogin, & Lyman, 1991) on a graduate course in the teaching of introductory psychology. Students who had completed the supervised-teaching experience performed better on a test of psychology content than did comparable students who had not. Data supported the informal observations of faculty, doctoral students, and PhD graduates about the value of the supervised-teaching experience.*

Rickard, Prentice-Dunn, Rogers, Scogin, and Lyman (1991) described the development and content of a teaching of psychology course (PY695) offered as a weekly 2-hr seminar. Doctoral students enrolled in the closely supervised course taught introductory psychology to undergraduates and received high performance ratings from those students. The PY695 course received very favorable feedback from the doctoral students.

It seems reasonable to expect that students who teach introductory psychology will acquire a greater mastery of general psychology content, but to our knowledge this relation has not been demonstrated. After publishing the Rickard et al. (1991) study, we obtained feedback from 66 psychology doctoral students and PhD graduates who had completed PY695. Those respondents indicated enthusiastic support for the course's contribution to their teaching ability and confidence; as predicted, they associated the teaching experience with the acquisition and retention of general psychology knowledge. This follow-up note reports data that support the students' subjective evaluations.

### Method

#### Participants

Ten doctoral students in their third year of training comprised the experimental group. The control group consisted of 12 students at about the same level of training. Thus, the two groups had taken similar coursework, except that only the experimental group had completed PY695.

#### Psychology Content Measure

The Area Concentration Achievement Test (ACAT; Golden, 1992) was used as the outcome measure. The ACAT contains 240 multiple-choice items that assess 12 content areas in psychology: abnormal, animal learning/

that particular area. The items have received extensive reliability and validity testing (Golden, 1992) and are rated for difficulty. Equivalent forms were provided for each person's pretest and posttest.

#### Procedure

The pretest was administered during the first week of the semester; the posttest was given during the last 2 weeks. Students in both groups were told that they were participating in an ACAT validity study; its relation to the PY695 course was not mentioned. Participants were unaware at the time of the pretest that they would later be asked to complete a posttest measure. Each test was completed in one sitting of approximately 2 hr. Participants were given \$10 each time the test was administered.

### Results

Standard scores on each of the 12 content areas were used in the analyses. A multivariate analysis of variance using each participant's 12 pretest scores revealed no significant difference between the experimental and control groups at the outset of the study,  $F(9, 12) = .75, p < .68$ ; Wilks's lambda = .50. However, the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group on the posttest ACAT,  $F(9, 12) = 4.77, p < .01$ ; Wilks's lambda = .13.

To further investigate the impact of PY695, a univariate analysis of covariance was conducted on each of the 12 content areas. Each subject's posttest score served as the dependent variable, and each subject's pretest score served as the covariate. All experimental group means were higher than those of the control group. Six content areas reached significance ( $p < .05$ ): abnormal, animal learning/motivation, developmental, human learning/cognition, personality, and sensation/perception. Three other effects were marginal: physiological ( $p < .09$ ), experimental design ( $p < .15$ ), and social ( $p < .16$ ).

### Discussion

Faculty had long commented on the advantage on doctoral candidacy examinations held by students who had completed PY695. In our survey, virtually all students cited their belief that PY695 led to greater mastery of psychology content. Results of this follow-up study support both sets of subjective observations. Doctoral students who completed PY695 performed significantly better overall on objective tests designed to measure psychology content. In a breakdown of performance by content area, PY695 students were significantly better in some but not in all areas. For example, experimental and control subjects scored equally well on content that both groups had taken as multiple courses in their graduate program (clinical/counseling and statistics).

motivation, clinical/counseling, developmental, experimental design, history and systems, human learning/cognition, personality, physiological, sensation/perception, social, and statistics. Each content area consists of 20 items randomly chosen from a bank of more than 2,000 items for

Extensive exposure to those courses probably outweighed any effects of PY695.

PY695 has several valuable features; it provides an opportunity to exchange teaching strategies with the instructor and peers, feedback about personal teaching styles, and su-

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