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Recommended Citation

Bacon, P. L. (2009, January). *The more you know: Reviewing concepts using student-created public service announcements*. Poster presented at the National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology, St. Pete Beach, FL.

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The More You Know: Reviewing Concepts Using Student-Created Public Service Announcements

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Introduction

In past course evaluations, my social psychology students consistently reported that they started offering their roommates unsolicited social psychological interpretations of their behaviors and beliefs. I began to wonder if my students' desire to educate others could be harnessed to help them review course material. I reasoned that elaborating on the material covered in the class would help them learn (Loyens, Rikers, & Schmidt, 2007) and finding a creative outlet for their desire to teach others might preserve some roommate relationships.

In an attempt to encourage students to build on past material, I turned to one of the most well-known Public Service Announcements (PSA): NBC's The More You Know information campaign. The brief More You Know PSAs teach viewers important information related to such topics as health, education, and the environment. A number of humorous spoofs of NBC's PSAs have also emerged, such as a series of fake PSAs using cast members from *The Office*, a popular television show. After spending 5 minutes watching some of the spoofs, my class was ready for the assignment.

PSA Assignment

- Students received extra course credit for creating their own humorous mock PSAs.
- The PSA had to teach the viewer about a social psychological concept covered in our class.
- The PSA had to be humorous, short (less than 2 minutes) and no more than PG-13.
- Students could work in any size group to create the PSA.
- Students did not need to use editing software to create their videos. Video equipment and editing software was available to all students if they wanted to use it.
- On the last day of class, the students played their recorded PSAs for the class.
- Each student wrote a brief paper explaining their PSA.

Participation

Typically, between 50% to 75% of the 30 students in a class choose to make a PSA.

Students' Reactions

Students who completed a PSA answered questions about the assignment using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The results suggest that students had positive reactions to the assignment (see Table 1 for means).

Table 1: Fall 2007 Responses (N = 28)	Mean (SD)
Because of the PSA assignment, I reviewed material covered earlier in the semester.	5.00 (0.77)
The PSA assignment aided in my understanding of a social psychological concept.	4.93 (0.72)
The PSA assignment caused me to talk about social psychology with my classmates outside of class.	4.89 (0.74)
The PSA assignment helped me relate social psychology concepts to the real world.	5.07 (0.66)
The PSA assignment was enjoyable.	5.32 (0.72)
The PSA assignment let me demonstrate my understanding of social psychology in a creative way.	5.25 (0.58)
The PSA assignment should be used in future social psychology classes.	5.25 (0.75)
I did not learn anything from the PSA assignment that I didn't already know.	3.10 (1.03)
The amount of time spent on the PSA assignment was not worth what I got out of it.	2.25 (0.93)

One open-ended question on the course evaluation asks all students "which specific class periods or class activities did you most enjoy?" Over 20% of students typically list watching the PSAs as one of their favorite activities. The positive reaction is not limited to students who created a PSA.

Conclusions

- Students reported that the PSA assignment was enjoyable and worthwhile. Students found that the assignment made them review the concepts covered earlier in the semester and helped them relate social psychological concepts to the real world.
- Students felt that the assignment allowed them to demonstrate what they know about social psychology in a creative way. Students were not asked if they discussed their PSA assignment with friends who were not in the class, so it is unclear if the PSAs reached a wider audience. At least one PSA is now posted on YouTube and has received nearly 120 viewings, suggesting that the PSA assignment may be of interest to more than the 30 students in the class.
- Showing the students' PSAs on the last day of class provides the class with a memorable ending to the semester that acts as a "parting ways" strategy (Eggleston & Smith, 2002). Students are excited to share their projects with each other and the audience is appreciative of their efforts. The projects often refer to funny moments from the class and remind the students of the variety of topics covered in the course.
- By collecting copies of the PSAs, I now have a collection of clips to use during lectures to illustrate concepts. The students enjoy seeing the PSAs from previous classes because they find them funny and also because it gives them a sense of what the final product should look like.

References

Eggleston, T., & Smith, G. (2002). Parting ways: Ending your course. *APS Observer*, 15, 15-16 and 29-30.

Loyens, S. M. M., Rikers, R. M. J. P., & Schmidt, H. G. (2007). Students' conceptions of distinct constructivist assumptions. *European Journal of Psychology Education*, 22, 179-199.