Questions to shape your BRIDGE project posting and presentation ("Going Public")

1. **Identify class level, specify whether core, elective, or major requirement, any other pertinent information on class demographics.**

   The course I targeted was Research Methods: Social Psychology (PSY 303). Psychologists use scientific methods to investigate phenomena of interest, and thus, a major goal of the Psychology Department is to teach students the methods that psychologists use in their investigations. PSY 303 is one of several courses that can fulfill our research methods requirement. Each fall and spring semester 16 students (usually seniors) enroll in this course with its accompanying lab. Most of the students are females; many are not enamored with research.

2. **What problems or questions about my students' learning and my teaching strategies did I address?**

   One of the major goals of this class has always been to learn to prepare an American Psychological Association (APA) style research report. As part of this process, students design social experimentation, collect and analyze data, and interpret results. Then I teach them how to provide this information (as well as other pertinent information such as a literature review) in a report using APA Publication style. The students' final paper is meant to be a correct, but less comprehensive paper than that typically produced by experts in that the literature review should be pertinent and coherent, but not necessarily be a comprehensive representation of all that has been done in the field. The problem I've confronted is that students often hand in incomprehensible reviews of the literature; they often were not demonstrating appropriate command of the desired skills (sometimes they were not even showing command of the English language!). My goal for BRIDGE was to examine my teaching strategies involved in training students to write a literature review for an APA style paper.

3. **Did I rethink my course goals? (Explain.)**

   No, I did not rethink my course goals, but I did rethink how I can get students to achieve those goals.

4. **What methods did I use to gain information? [Specify any CATs here, including changes in assignments and assessments, if relevant.]**

   Students were assigned 2 papers as usual. I use the first paper to teach students to become accustomed to many of the activities involved in the task

of writing an APA style paper. We go over the different sections of the paper (e.g., method, results), and students tackle the task of putting together this partially complete paper. Much of the work (and the anxiety!) for this paper is spent on the results section, analyzing and interpreting the statistics. What often is initially perceived as an insurmountable task (i.e., statistics) is later done with ease because of this early focus. Then for the second paper, students write a "complete" APA style paper. The main difference between the first and second papers is that the second paper includes a review of the relevant previous literature in both an introduction and a discussion section. Part of learning how to write a literature review includes citation of literature in text and in a references section. I feel as though I had already had accomplished teaching citation well prior to participating in BRIDGE; I needed to work on teaching students how to write the content of the literature review.

To improve student performance in this area, I first took a hard look at the literature review example that I provide for my students. When I first started teaching this class, I had provided a literature review example that an expert would write. This was only helpful for the most advanced of students. Then about 5 years ago, having recognized the inadequacies of the example I was using, I created a literature review example from a conference proposal written by one of my independent study students (yes, I got his permission!). This student is a very good writer (in fact, he too writes at the level of an expert), and although the form of what I wanted was in this literature review (i.e., what to put where), I suspect that the content of this work was still too difficult for many of the students to grasp (see "Example 1" in this document). So I went back to the drawing board, and building this skill in my students became my BRIDGE project. As part of BRIDGE, I wrote a literature review that is much simpler in content, but still good in form (see "Example 2"). In addition, this review was written with the recognition that my students likely will not find everything in the literature that they wish to find (e.g., as appropriate, no one has done the exact research project that they are writing about), and the review I wrote shows students how to handle this issue. This newly produced review provided my students with an additional example that is a good model for the type of literature review I expect from students in this class.

5. What <u>examples or evidence of student performance</u> can I offer to illustrate how I drew conclusions?   [If possible, please include samples to illustrate effects of your interventions. Emphasis may be on qualitative or quantitative data.]

Approximately 80% of the Fall 08 class followed the model literature review that I most recently wrote. They wrote a relatively simple, but coherent literature review. In addition, students commented explicitly on how helpful the last model was (they did receive both "Example 1" and "Example 2").

In an effort to determine quantitatively whether the new literature review teaching technique had a significant impact on my students, I calculated a t test in which I compared final paper grades for a recent class (Fall 08) and the class that preceded it (Spring 08). Students taught using the new technique had significantly better grades (M = 88.00%, SD = 8.45) than students taught using the old technique (M = 78.35%, SD = 9.19), $t = 2.34$, p < .007. However, we cannot speculate that the new technique is superior to the old technique, without at least making one additional comparison. Casual observation of the more recent class suggested that these students were superior to the previous class in a variety of ways, ways having nothing to do with the new technique—they were just better students. To determine if this was the case, I compared the two classes on grades for their first paper (the new technique was not used here for either class). This suspicion was confirmed; the more recent class relative to the earlier class was composed of students who achieved better grades without the help of the new technique, $t = 2.12$, p < .05.

Further exploration took place after the academic year with BRIDGE ended. In this case I compared the most recent two semesters (Fall 08 and Spring 09) in which the new technique was used to 2 randomly selected previous semesters (Fall 04 and Spring 06) in which the new technique was not used. Before the new technique was used, students achieved an 83.93% on their final papers; they achieved an 85.93% on their final papers using the new technique; this difference is not significant. Removing the "superior" Fall 08 class and just comparing Spring 09 (new technique) and Fall 04 (traditional technique) did not lead to significant differences. Continued revision of the teaching tools and testing will take place in an effort to maximize performance.

6. **What <u>theories or debates about learning</u> frame or illuminate my inquiry?**
    [Please refer here to specific readings and theories or debates, e.g., expert/novice (*How People Learn*), "cow" vs. "bull" as William Perry defines them, coverage vs. critical thinking (Craig Nelson), "backward design" and assignment-centeredness (Randy Bass, Barbara Walvoord), disciplinary assumptions in designing and judging assignments (Greg

Colomb), "opinion" vs. taking personal charge of course concepts (Kegan)etc.]

The distinction between experts and novices (e.g., Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999) was used to illuminate my inquiry. I originally learned about the research relevant to this distinction in the late 1980s, but came to consider this work with new eyes (see explanation below). As Bransford et al. note, experts recognize features in presented material that are not noticed by novices. I know what to look for in a written piece about psychological research, and I know how to express that information in my own writing, but my students generally do not. Past attempts at assessment revealed that students did seem to understand the material (they generally could speak about it), but their written expression of this work was not coherent. My students, as novices, did not understand how to take material from journals and create meaningful paragraphs of information. Once they were provided with a template indicating specifically how to organize the information, they had a starting point, and potentially were able to see how to organize the knowledge obtained.

7.   **What have I learned (or what new hypotheses have I developed) so far?**

While the new technique may seem superior to a casual observer (e.g., student comments suggests that the literature review process is easier with the new rather than the old technique), this conclusion cannot not yet be drawn with any certainty. Further testing should help determine whether this technique should be pursued or adjusted.

8.   **Where will I go from here?**

More classes should be tested to determine whether the new technique yields results that are superior to those obtained when teaching with the older technique.

In the future, I also intend to provide a "practice" assignment that will help students develop the literature-writing skill (I realized through BRIDGE that my students are given an opportunity to practice everything in my course EXCEPT writing a literature review).

Example 1

The Effects of Source Credibility and Emotional Content of Pretrial Publicity on Mock

Juror Assessments

General Introduction to the topic

Scholars have examined the conflict between the freedom of the press and the right of an impartial jury for the accused (e.g., Kramer, Kerr, & Carroll, 1990). One question that has been considered is whether press coverage compromises the defendant's rights. Some have found damaging effects of pretrial publicity (PTP) on juror impartiality (e.g., see the meta-analysis by Steblay, Besirevic, Fulero, & Jimenez-Lorente, 1999).

Transition sentence

One factor that may play a role in the influence of PTP is the credibility of the media source. While media source credibility has been demonstrated to have an effect on opinion change (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), the effects have been insufficiently examined

points out a gap in the literature

Provides an example of the existing literature. Gives info. regarding IV, DV + pertinent results.

in a mock juror paradigm. In one of the few studies that have examined this issue, Simon (1966) provided mock jurors with newspaper articles similar to tabloid or traditional newspaper sources. Although a greater percentage of participants who read the sensational rather than the more conservative sources found the defendants guilty in pretrial measures, the variation of source was confounded by the inculpatory statements of the articles, headline size, and emotional language.

points out methodological problem with previous literature

Transition sentence

Provides an example of the existing literature

The role of emotional content of PTP has been examined more directly by others. For example, Edwards and Bryan (1997) manipulated the emotional content of inadmissible and admissible evidence within a trial. Those instructed to disregard emotional information gave higher guilt judgments than those with no instructions to disregard or those for whom the information was emotionally neutral.

gives information regarding IVs, DV + pertinent results

Example 2 (handwritten)

Effects of Victim Clothing and Offender Intoxication on Blame Attribution in a Spousal Abuse

Scenario

Open with a very general statement (handwritten annotation)

Jurors are often put in a position to evaluate how responsible one is for a violent crime, thus it is important to determine what factors influence perceived responsibility. One of the factors that have been found to influence the perceived responsibility of those involved in a crime is offender intoxication. For example, Critchlow (1995) found that intoxicated offenders were considered less responsible for an assault than sober offenders. Researchers have also considered offender intoxication within a rape scenario; for example, Richardson and Campbell (1982) found that male offenders were seen as less responsible for a rape when intoxicated than when not intoxicated.

Get more specific – focus on one IV with literature as relevant as possible (handwritten annotation)

Use transitions to create flow between paragraphs. (handwritten annotation)

Focus on 2nd IV with lit. as relevant as possible. (handwritten annotation)

Another factor that has been shown to affect perceived responsibility for violent crime is how the victim is dressed. For example, Whatley (1994) found that female victims who dressed seductively were attributed more blame in a marital rape situation than female victims non-seductively dressed. Similarly, Workman and Freeburg (1999) found that study participants blamed the victim of a date rape more when she wore a short rather than long skirt.

Purpose statement (handwritten annotation)

The current study investigates the main and interactive effects of victim clothing (short skirt, long skirt) and offender intoxication (presence, absence) within a spousal abuse scenario.

Rationale for doing study (handwritten annotation)

Researchers have not yet considered how these factors together impact perceptions of observers presented with a spousal abuse situation. Based on findings from previous research (e.g., Critchlow, 1995), participants were expected to attribute less blame to an intoxicated offender than one who is not intoxicated. Similarly, previous research, such as that by Workman and

Reasons for hypotheses stated (handwritten annotation)

Freeburg (1999) leads to the hypothesis that participants are expected to attribute less blame to a victim who was wearing a long skirt as opposed to a short skirt at the time of the offense. However, since previous researchers have not yet considered whether the victim's clothing will affect observers' impressions differentially when the offender is intoxicated rather than not intoxicated, an interaction hypothesis has not been developed. Participants read a scenario

Brief mention of method (handwritten annotation)

depicting an act of spousal abuse and then answered a questionnaire.