



Student Cognitions

Heather Schultz

How an understanding of Applied Behavioral Science (ABS) can help with Leadership roles and positions

On a daily basis many of us find ourselves involved in a variety of important leadership roles or positions. Some of us are leaders in clubs, sports teams, group projects, or in a work environment. When carrying out our duties, what we say and do really does count. People look up to us and we want to be the best possible leader. The question at hand is how do we become a successful leader? According to the “great man” theory proposed by Thomas Carlyle (1888), some people are born great leaders. Whether some people are natural leaders or not, it is certainly true that people can work at it and learn how to become great leaders (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Leadership is a process of influencing the behavior of others that leads to positive results. The success of leaders is measured by their ability to get things done through others (CLG, 2013). Understanding why people do or say what they do, or even fail to act, can maximize your leadership effectiveness. The key to doing this is by learning and applying the science of behavior.

You can use Applied Behavioral Science (ABS) in your leadership positions to understand why people say and do certain things. Understanding this can be beneficial in bringing out the good characteristics of the people around you. When you bring out other’s good characteristics they become better group members. Basically, as a leader, if you don’t affect behavior then you are not being effective! This is because nothing changes until behaviors change (CLG, 2013).

A key to good leadership is being able to lead a whole person. Not everyone can leave their feelings at the door, so



as a leader you must constantly be aware of the people you are leading. Acknowledging that people have valid feelings is essential because identifying and addressing root feelings will help explain some behaviors. ABS is a teaching and coaching approach in which a leader’s goals become the success of every employee (CLG, 2013).

By utilizing this science in your leadership roles or positions, you will be able to recognize the correct behaviors to measure and make early predictions as to whether the desired results will be achieved. Ultimately, the key to great leadership is to utilize the tools provided by ABS to achieve behaviors linked to end results (the behaviors that will accomplish group goals).

References

- Bass, B. M. & Avolio, B. J. (1994). *Improving organizational effectiveness through transformational leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Carlyle, T. (1888). *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, Fredrick A. Stokes & Brother, New York
- CLG. (2013). *Applied Behavioral Science*. Retrieved March 17, 2013, from www.clg.com/Science-Of-Success/Applied-Behavioral-Science.aspx
- Whitmore, P. G. (2009). A new mindset for a new mind. *T+D*, 61-65.

Contents

Student Cognitions	1
Important Dates	1
Psychology in a Box Update	2
2013 Psi Chi Inductees	2
Faculty Cognitions	3
Psychobabbles	4
Psychology Club Update	4
Optical Illusion	4

Important Dates

- ◆ WPUPC: 4-20-2013
- ◆ Psi Chi Induction: 4-24-2013
- ◆ Spring finals: 4-30-2013
- ◆ Graduation: 5-11-2013
- ◆ Mother’s Day: 5-12-2013
- ◆ Memorial Day: 5-27-2013
- ◆ Father’s Day: 6-16-2013
- ◆ Fall semester: 8-26-2013

“Everyone who is a part of Psi Chi works incredibly hard, and it is an honor to be a part of such an amazing group. To future members I would say get as actively involved in Psi Chi as possible!”

Jessica Tanigawa

"I was interested in psychology when I came here and now I am 10x more interested!!!"

PiaB Participant



New Psi Chi Members!

- ◆ Sarah Boward
- ◆ Trisha Bubenheim
- ◆ Alexandria Cox
- ◆ Charlsia Davenport
- ◆ Angelina Gasparo
- ◆ Alexis Palumbo
- ◆ Dr. Mary Ann Rafoth
- ◆ Aubree Ray
- ◆ Rachel Ricciardulli
- ◆ Alexandra Salerno
- ◆ Catherine Scherer
- ◆ Stephanie Sims
- ◆ Kylie St. Louis
- ◆ Lauren Szpak
- ◆ Jessica Tanigawa
- ◆ Beth Trill
- ◆ Chelsea Vith
- ◆ Stacy Wade

"Everyone was hands on and positive. It was definitely interesting!"

PiaB Participant

Psychology in a Box

On Friday, March 8, 2013, RMU psychology students provided a series of interactive learning activities for 53 high school students from three districts in the area (Cornell, Moon, and Quaker Valley). Most of the high school students were taking a psychology course, and some were enrolled in an Advanced Placement course that may allow them to earn college credits.

The event began with opening comments from Dr. Stephen Paul and Eric Levine, president of Psi Chi. Eric developed the initial proposal for the project, based on his interest in advancing the science of psychology. He stated, *"Our goal was to create something that would serve more than one purpose. The first was to educate high school students about psychology. The idea was to catch them before they are daunted with the decision about what to study in college; we wanted to make sure psychology had a seat at the table. The second goal was to showcase the amazing program RMU boasts with a strong curriculum and an equally strong staff. I felt that students attending RMU already knew that, but prospective students were unaware; so that needed to change."* Working with Dr. Paul, he recruited RMU students, who developed multiple series of engaging activities, representing six fields of psychology: cognitive, gender, abnormal, sport, social, and perception. Eric mentioned that *"this event simply wouldn't have happened without the overwhelming support we received from active members of Psi Chi and the Psychology Club. They should be commended for volunteering their time to give back to the field of psychology."*

Dr. Kathryn Dennick-Brecht



Each high school student attended four of the six sessions, so that some students from each district participated in each of the learning activities and were able to share information with their classmates about all sessions.

All of the psychologists from the Social Sciences Department attended the event, and were available to assist RMU students, if needed. Dr. Mary Ann Rafoth, Dean of the School of Education and Social Sciences, supported the event through providing breakfast and lunch for those in attendance, providing lanyards for each attendee, and talking to the students at lunch about the opportunities available for psychology graduates.

At the end of the event, both RMU students and the visiting students were asked to evaluate their experience, and the results indicate that it was very successful. SESS is looking forward to hosting another *Psychology in a Box* event in the 2013-14 academic year.

If you are interested in helping with this event, please contact Dr. Paul (paul@rmu.edu).

Photos: Paige Snider (RMU Photography Club).



Faculty Cognitions: *Losing Weight - Why is it so difficult?*

Dr. Monda

The weight-loss industry is a multi-million dollar market: “*Sprinkle Sensa on your food to lose 30 pounds without dieting.*” “*Take Quick-Trim to ‘burn and cleanse’ your system day and night.*” “*Join Weight Watchers for \$50 a month and look like Jennifer Hudson.*” “*Follow the Paleo diet and live the way we did back in the hunter-gatherer society.*” Regardless of whether these plans have scientific merit (most do not) their existence indicates that losing weight is a very important and relevant issue to Americans. The most recent scientific



research suggests that obesity rates in America are growing. Currently, over one third of adults are obese (35.7%) and by 2030 that number is expected to reach 44% (Ogden, Carroll, Kit, & Flegal, 2012). Obesity is linked to heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and certain cancers (Booth & Chakravarthy, 2002). As a result of the obesity epidemic, this will be the first generation of children to not outlive their parents.

So how do we change this trend? Most recognize that to lose weight you need to decrease calorie consumption and increase physical activity. But if losing weight was as easy as changing our diets and exercising more, why aren't more people successful? The scientific literature suggests that there are psychological components that impact success or failure that are important to consider when making a behavior change. Researchers have noted that we often believe that change is more feasible than it really

is. This phenomenon, the “*false hope syndrome,*” suggests that we often predict that we will lose weight quicker and more easily than possible (Polivy & Herman, 2002). Faulty beliefs about the speed and ease of losing weight can lead us to set unrealistic goals and expectations. Consequently, we set ourselves up for failure. However, this does not dissuade us from trying again. When we fail, we often attribute it to our own effort (*I just didn't try hard enough!*) and make another attempt at self-change. Without addressing the real issue, the unrealistic goal, dieters will cycle through this pattern of false hope and failure.

Another psychological issue that can impact weight loss efforts is our readiness to make a change. The Transtheoretical Model holds that self-change occurs through a series of five stages; each addressing to what degree a person is ready to make a change (Prochaska, Norcross, & DiClemente, 1994).

First, the *precontemplation* stage represents people who are not thinking or intending to change a problem behavior. These individuals may be in denial or may not have any desire to change. The *contemplation* stage involves people thinking about making a change within the next six months. These individuals may see the benefits of losing weight but may not be fully committed yet. The third stage is the most overlooked stage: *Preparation*. Here the individual is committed to making the change in the near future but is working on creating a plan for how the change is going to happen and how to overcome any barriers. The fourth stage, *action*, is the most visible. During action, an individual actively tries to reduce calorie consumption, increase physical activity, etc. If a person is able to successfully make a change for at least 6 months, they are considered to be in the *maintenance* phase which involves maintaining the change to avoid relapse.

During the process of a behavior change, a person may find him or

herself moving back and forth between stages. In terms of successes and failures, people most often fail in the action stage while it is *most important* to spend time in the preparation phase. Often, self-changers jump too quickly into action without appropriately planning for barriers that they may experience along the way. Spending time in preparation before taking action allows us to evaluate our goals and come up with potential solutions for barriers that we may encounter. Essentially, the research suggests that psychologically preparing for the self-change is just as important as making the change itself.

While the public may still find themselves getting caught up in the allure of the “quick fix,” real weight loss occurs when we address both the physiological and the psychological aspects of self-change. While this process may take more time than we realize, the number of successful self-changers out there indicate that weight loss is possible. With a little help from the science of psychology, we can teach people how to make and maintain the lifestyle changes that will lead to a healthier and happier generation of Americans.

References

- Booth, F. & Chakravarthy, M. (2002). Costs and consequences of sedentary living: New battleground for an old enemy. *President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Research Digest*, 3(16), 1-8.
- Ogden, C. L., Carroll, M. D., Kit, B. K., & Flegal, K. M. (2012). Prevalence of obesity in the United States, 2009-2010. *National Center for Health Statistics Data Brief*, 82, 1-8.
- Polivy, J., & Herman, C. P. (2002). If at first you don't succeed: False hopes of self-change. *American Psychologist*, 57, 677-689.
- Prochaska, J., Norcross, J., & DiClemente, C. (1994). *Changing For Good*. New York: Avon.

“As a result of the obesity epidemic, this will be the first generation of children to not outlive their parents.”

Psychology Club Update

Psychology Club had a successful semester so far and there are still some wonderful upcoming events!

We look forward to working with *Hope Grows*; providing help clearing out gardens for spring. This will take place in April - weather permitting.

We are also excited to put together our first career development panel to include full and part time psychology faculty. This panel will allow students to ask questions they might have about an area of psychology, graduate school, or the professors' personal

experiences in their disciplines. We hope that this will be a useful tool for all students interested in psychology and we encourage all to attend!

Psychology Club has big plans for the fall semester and can't wait to get more students more involved!

Psychobabbles with Dr. Ventura



Dr. Elizabeth Ventura is a licensed professional counselor who teaches some psychology courses for RMU. She received her Ph.D. in counselor education and supervision with an emphasis on trauma theory and supervision from Duquesne University in 2010. She was kind enough to answer a few questions for us.

Ψ If you could, who would you trade places with for a day?

EV: "FBI Profiler on *Criminal Minds*"

Ψ If you hadn't gone into psychology, what would you have done?

EV: "Opened a spa! I had an interest in *Journalism* for a bit and have a family of lawyers, but I probably would have gone for the spa!"

Ψ What is your favorite hobby?

EV: "Going to the spa! Also, reading and listening to music."

Ψ What animal would you be?

Gina Mercuri & Courtney Langston

EV: "A polar bear. I like winter and they're protective of their cubs. Also, they look comfortable all the time."

Ψ What is the strangest thing your son has said or done thus far?

EV: "Okay, the other day he had a cold and he came home crying and said 'Mom my nose isn't working.' I told him it's just stopped up right now you have a cold, and he says, 'No, my nose has stopped working and my eyebrows hurt!' He had a headache too."

Ψ Favorite food?

EV: "Flat bread pizza."

Ψ Who is your psychology hero?

EV: "Freud."

Ψ Thank you for the interview Dr. Ventura; last question: How would you describe yourself in three words?

EV: "Outgoing, responsible, and compassionate."

Optical Illusion

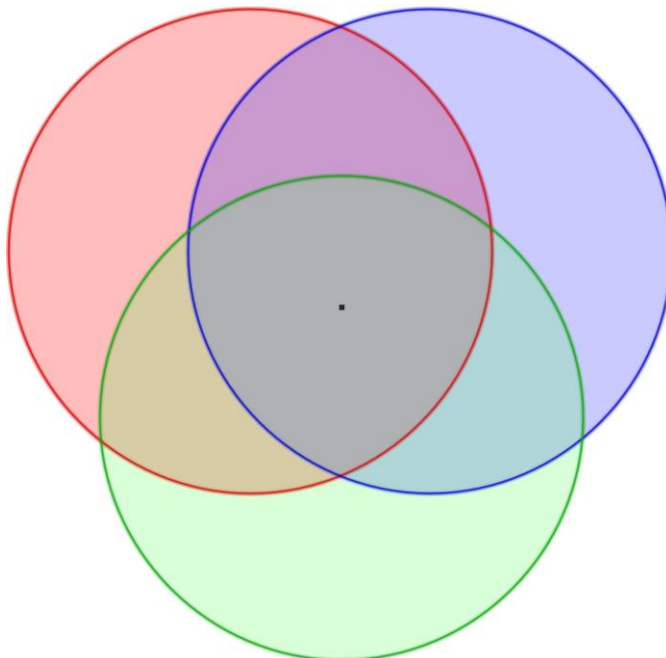
This illusion (below-right) was a top-ten best illusion of 2012 (for more, go see illusionoftheyear.com).

It is a demonstration of "attentional modulation of perceived color." In other words, how you direct your attention influences the color that you perceive.

First, notice that the middle region is really just gray. To see the illusion, focus your eyes on the central fixation dot. Without moving your eyes, attend to one of the colored disks (red, blue, or green). The entire disk will suddenly take on a uniform color (whichever you have attended to) - including the central gray area! You sometimes see a gray region as part of a uniform blue, red, or green object!

Now, and still without moving your eyes, shift your attention to a different colored disk and it will cause the center (gray) area to take on the new color.

Try to make the gray area match the other colored areas in the figure.



RMU Psi Chi
Campus Box 1556
Robert Morris University
6001 University Blvd.
Moon Twp, PA 15108

Phone (Dr. Paul):
(412) 397-5416

Fax: (412) 397-2411

PsiChi@mail.rmu.edu

<https://sites.google.com/a/mail.rmu.edu/psichi/Home>

Twitter:
[@RMU_PsiChi](https://twitter.com/RMU_PsiChi)