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Introduction to Special Issue

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Accommodating Different Learning Styles Using YouTube: An Approach to Helping Students Understand Ecological Systems Theory 1

Michael R. Langlais

Theories of the family, specifically ecological systems theory, can be difficult for students to grasp, particularly when instructors only use lecture methods. The activity this article discusses proposes a personalized experiential learning activity that appeals to students with various learning styles. The activity should help all students understand and apply early models of ecological systems theory, which includes microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. After discussing each subsystem and bi-directional influences between individuals and the environment with students, instructors have students watch a popular YouTube video portraying family conflict or support. Students work in pairs or small groups to analyze family behavior depicted in the video, according to each ecological systems theory subsystem. Students write responses and discuss them with the class. Formal and informal evaluations conducted after using this YouTube-based approach demonstrate students' understanding and retention of, and interest in, ecological systems theory.

Key words: ecological systems theory, experiential learning, family conflict, family support

Effectiveness of Theory Related Learning Activities 9

Kristie B. Chandler

This study compared two learning activities, a research article critique learning activity and a family science theory project involving music (referred to as the "Music Theory Project"), to determine if the learning activity is associated with increased knowledge of common family science theories. Specifically, this study examines students' knowledge of overall subject matter content, as well as knowledge of common marriage and family theories presented during an introductory marriage and family course. Participants consisted of students enrolled in the introductory marriage and family course in a family studies degree. Findings indicate that students demonstrated increased knowledge of both overall course content knowledge and theory knowledge at a statistically significant

level. However, determining exactly which learning activity had a greater impact on the learning process was not clearly identifiable.

Keywords: teaching theory, assignment effectiveness, learning activities, music

“What Do You Have to Offer Me?”: A Relationship Building Activity for Demonstrating Social Exchange Theory **26**

Raeann R. Hamon and Katherine S. Bull

This article describes “What Do You Have to Offer Me?,” an interactive classroom activity designed to help students encounter social exchange theory in action. During the exercise, each student selected seven cards, each containing a characteristic related to personality, physical characteristics, family history, finances, ideology, and occupation. Next, students were asked to mill around the classroom and find someone with whom they would be interested in developing a relationship based on their assigned characteristics. Once all students found partners and took their seats, students reflected on the process of the activity and its application to social exchange theory. Along with providing details on the activity, we conclude with student reflections and evaluative data on the exercise.

Keywords: teaching family theory, social exchange theory, pedagogy, relationship formation

A Comparative, Web-Based Learning Activity for Teaching Family Theory **41**

Daniel Perlman

This article describes a web-based comparative analysis assignment for a Human Development and Family Science theories course. Students worked in small groups, each of which studied one theoretical perspective. Then, groups used their theories to do VoiceThread-narrated analyses of child abuse cases. After presentation of VoiceThread to other groups in class, online discussion ensued; finally, students answered comparative and evaluative questions about the set of theories. This paper presents information on the assignment’s pedagogical underpinnings and its technological systems, along with step-by-step description and information about students. The paper concludes with evaluative data on the assignment and recommendations for future use. Students gave the assignment a good overall rating. The assignment appears to have fostered higher order learning objectives relevant to Bloom’s taxonomy and is generalizable to other courses with multiple perspective or choices among alternatives.

Keywords: family theory, comparative analysis, VoiceThread, blended learning

Teaching Pedagogy and Techniques

Comparative Approaches to Teaching Family Theory 56

Silvia K. Bartolic, Katherine A. Lyon, Laura Sierra, and James White

We argue that a comparative approach is a pedagogically useful approach to teaching family theories. Currently, many of the most popular texts on theory use a “within” theoretical framework to present material to students (e.g., Smith & Hamon, 2012; White, Klein & Martin, 2014). The recent exception to this is Fine and Fincham’s substantive issues approach (2013). We propose a comparative approach situated between the purely substantive issue approach and the more abstract “within” frameworks approach. First, we discuss the current situation of teaching family theories based on formats of extant texts. Then we detail our proposed comparative approach. Finally, we detail two examples of how to use this comparative approach in teaching family theories.

Keywords: theory, induction, deduction, teaching

Exploring Sculptures to Teach Family Development Theory: The Walking Tour Activity 71

Jacki Fitzpatrick

The university campus has several life-size statues that represent individuals and dyads at various ages. The instructor conducts a walking tour with students to create hypothetical biographies for the individuals or dyads. These biographies are used as a means to explain family development (FD) theory concepts, such as stages and developmental tasks. This article notes teaching options for other educators (with or without access to sculptures).

Keywords: family development, stages, lifecycle transitions, family structures, active learning, observation, group discussions

Doing Symbolic Interactionism: Engaging Students to Foster Comprehension of Theoretical Concepts and Principles **90**

Jacki Fitzpatrick

This paper summarizes an activity in which students engage in a meaning-making process (via group interaction). Class discussion follows the activity, in which the instructor facilitates deconstruction of symbolic interactionism (SI) theory concepts and principles. Discussion is designed to design foster students' abilities to identify potential links between SI theory and familial dynamics.

Keywords: Symbolic interactionism, meaning-making, group dynamics, deconstruction, flipped classroom, class activity, andragogy