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How Sweet It Is: Candy-Based Demonstrations in Introductory Psychology

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Overview

Given the popularity of active learning exercises, especially those involving candy (e.g., Cherny, 2008), I created a collection of demonstrations in introductory psychology that involve the use of candy. To test their effectiveness in helping students learn concepts introductory psychology, I asked students to provide feedback about the how enjoyable some of the activities were, how useful they were in illustrating their intended topic, and whether they made the concepts more memorable. Results suggest that the "Twizzlers" exercise was the most memorable (as measured by accuracy to question #1) and that the "Jelly Bellies" exercise was the most enjoyable (as measured by responses to question #6).

Method

A sample of 62 current Introductory Psychology students at Butler University participated in some of the in-class demonstrations and completed an optional and anonymous survey about a selection of the activities after finishing the mid-term exam that followed the activities.

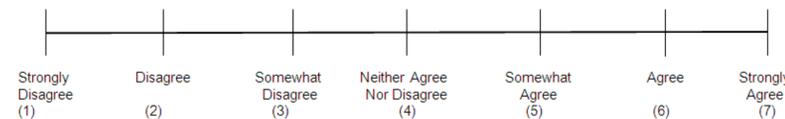| Topic	Demonstration	
Emotion: Ekman's Facial Feedback Hypothesis	Students hold Twizzler between teeth to mimic smiling	
Memory: Forgetting as Encoding Failure	Students choose "real" coin from visual array of options; compare to chocolate coin	
Piaget's Stages of Development: Conservation	Students see that a ½ oz. candy bar maintains its weight even when broken into smaller pieces	
Sensation: Debunking the "Tongue Map"	Students place Pixy Stix, Sour Patch Kids, and/or Lemonheads on different places on tongue and note sensations	
Research Methods: Representative Sampling	Students count proportion of each color in a sample of M&Ms and compare to the known population proportions	
Memory Distortions: Blocking/Tip-of-the-Tongue	Students try to identify flavors of Jelly Bellies in the absence of retrieval cues other than taste	
Social Influence: Obedience to Authority	Students follow directions of the instructor to chew a piece of gum for a specified amount of time, then wrap the chewed gum in a piece of paper, and throw it on the floor	

Sample Survey

This is not graded, is optional, and will not be associated with your name. Its purpose is for me to assess the effectiveness of class demonstrations. Thank you for your help.

1. What concept was **the Twizzler/Jolly Rancher exercise** intended to demonstrate (please be as specific as possible)? _____

   Please check here if you did not participate in this exercise: ☐

   For #2-#8, please write in a number from the following scale:

   | Strongly Disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Somewhat Disagree (3) | Neither Agree Nor Disagree (4) | Somewhat Agree (5) | Agree (6) | Strongly Agree (7) |

2. The Twizzler/Jolly Rancher exercise helped me to understand the class material better. _____
3. The Twizzler/Jolly Rancher exercise was a good supplement to lecture. _____
4. The Twizzler/Jolly Rancher exercise made the concepts discussed in class seem more "real-world." _____
5. The Twizzler/Jolly Rancher exercise helped me understand the principles of psychology. _____
6. The Twizzler/Jolly Rancher exercise made class more enjoyable. _____
7. The Twizzler/Jolly Rancher exercise helped me apply class concepts. _____
8. I recommend using the Twizzler/Jolly Rancher exercise again in an Introduction to Psychology course. _____

Results

Accuracy
(students who correctly answered #1)

	Accuracy
M&Ms ($N = 35$)	69%
Jelly Bellies ($N = 40$)	75%
Twizzlers ($N = 50$)	**92%**

Average Ratings by Question
(from students who correctly answered #1)

	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8
M&Ms	5.08	5.96	5.71	5.17	6.54	5.42	6.21
Jelly Bellies	**5.90**	6.31	**5.90**	**5.83**	**6.72**	5.66	**6.52**
Twizzlers	5.83	**6.39**	5.83	5.43	6.65	**6.11**	6.46