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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

Table with 2 columns: Topic and Demonstration. Topics include Emotion: Ekman's Facial Feedback Hypothesis, Memory: Forgetting as Encoding Failure, Piaget's Stages of Development: Conservation, Sensation: Debunking the "Tongue Map", Research Methods: Representative Sampling, Memory Distortions: Blocking/Tip-of-the-Tongue, and Social Influence: Obedience to Authority. Demonstrations include Twizzler exercise, coin selection, Hershey's bar weight, tongue map, M&Ms counting, Jelly Bellies identification, and gum chewing exercise.

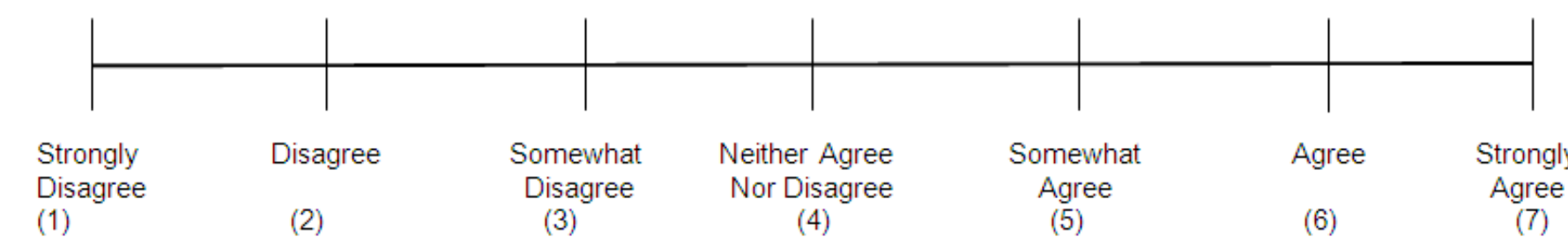
Sample Survey

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:



- 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

Table with 2 main sections: Accuracy (students who correctly answered #1) and Average Ratings by Question # (from students who correctly answered #1). Accuracy table shows M&Ms (69%), Jelly Bellies (75%), and Twizzlers (92%). Average Ratings table shows scores for questions #2 through #8 for M&Ms, Jelly Bellies, and Twizzlers.