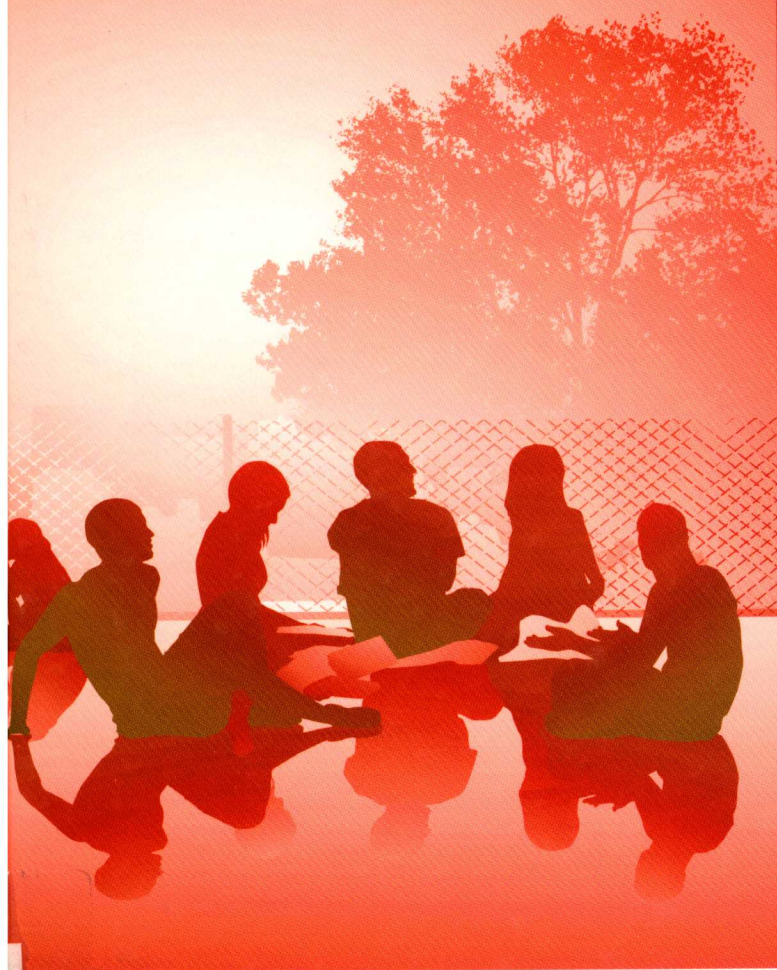


CLAREMONT APPLIED SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY SERIES



# Empirical Research in Teaching and Learning

Contributions from Social Psychology

*Edited by Debra Mashek and Elizabeth Yost Hammer*

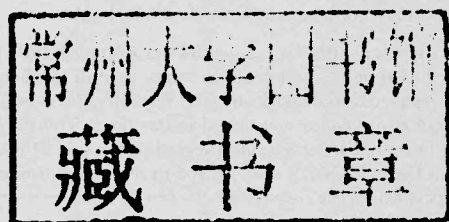
 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

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Debra Mashek and Elizabeth Yost Hammer



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# Empirical Research in Teaching and Learning



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# Preface

*Debra Mashek & Elizabeth Yost Hammer*

Dr Stuart Oskamp envisioned the Claremont Symposium on Applied Social Psychology as a venue for scholars to examine “topics crucial to our understanding of human relationships and the building of a healthy, diverse society” ([cgu.edu/pages/4513.asp](http://cgu.edu/pages/4513.asp)). Since its inception in 1986, the Symposium has time and again achieved this aim by interrogating timely issues such as extremism, the integration of work and family, community engagement, stigma and prejudice, psychological aspects of the legal system, the prevention of risk behaviors, intimate relationships, and cross-cultural relating.

Feeling that research in social psychology offers many lessons for higher education, we sought to continue this tradition by organizing the 2009 Claremont Symposium around issues of central importance to each of our colleagues and all of our students: teaching and learning. Once the conference theme was selected, it was clear that a collaboration was in order. To organize a high-quality and topical conference, the organizers should have a foot in both the social psychology and the teaching and learning worlds. Luckily, over several days of grading AP Psychology exams (and a few beers), we made a connection and the planning began.

Our collaboration includes two social psychologists. We are from different parts of the country, different types of institutions, and have focused our careers on different content matter. However, we have a similar passion for our students and classroom experiences and we both recognize the value of viewing education in social psychological terms. Debra Mashek specializes in close relationships and the application of close relationship theory to issues of community connectedness and community engagement. She is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Harvey Mudd College, a liberal arts college in Claremont, CA, and has received national recognition for her teaching. Elizabeth Yost Hammer has spent her career exploring issues related to teaching. She is currently a Kellogg Professor in teaching and serves as the Director of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching at Xavier University of Louisiana, the only historically Black and Catholic university in the country.

## Our Vision of the Volume

In our initial conversations about the array of topics we would like represented in the symposium and ultimately this volume, it became clear we both felt strongly that social psychology offers more than merely interesting insights into the form and function of teaching and learning. Indeed, social psychology offers concrete tools for enhancing teaching and learning.

Thus, we wanted contributors to both the Symposium and this volume to draw upon empirical research and empirically-based theories from social psychology to inform the scholarship of teaching and learning. Chapters begin by providing an accessible theoretical grounding in the social psychological principles most relevant to the authors' area of expertise. Chapters then describe how this theoretical lens informs our understanding of teaching and learning (i.e., demonstrating how we can see these processes through a social psychological frame). In addition to providing specific empirical evidence drawn from teaching and learning contexts, chapters provide concrete strategies for translating this evidence "on the ground."

Importantly, we see this volume as a resource for all who are interested in enhancing teaching and learning in the higher education setting. The emphasis on applying social psychology—in conjunction with a solid empirical approach—makes this volume relevant to scholarly teachers from all disciplines. Although all chapters focus on social psychological questions, the answers to these questions are relevant to all classrooms. Likewise, we anticipate the people who staff centers associated with faculty development initiatives designed to advance the art and science of teaching will find value in the empirically-validated tools offered in these chapters.

## Content Contributors

Social psychology examines the many ways we are influenced by both social and non-social contexts. As the table of contents of any social psychology textbook reveals, the topics within social psychology are vast and varied, ranging from self-perception to other-perception, helping to hurting, and self-identity to group identity. Rather than attempt an exhaustive survey of the many ways social psychological theories bear on teaching and learning, the contributors we invited crafted chapters highlighting what is possible in this domain.

We knew that we needed someone to set the context of the volume—to establish the usefulness of researching and applying social psychology in the classroom. Regan Gurung quickly came to mind. He recently co-authored a book, *Optimizing teaching and learning: Practicing pedagogical research*, directly calling for an increase in the scholarship of teaching in learning. We knew his voice would make the case for our theme.



When considering social psychology in the classroom, one of the first things that comes to mind is the student–teacher relationship and classroom interactions. Because of her work on immediacy behaviors, Janie Wilson was a natural for our theme. She is one of the first scholars to do empirical, classroom-specific research on issues such as touching (in an appropriate context, of course) and first impressions of faculty formed via a pre-semester email.

The study of stereotyping and prejudice is one of the most enduring areas of social psychology. Obviously the applications to higher education are vast. We recognized that Shelva Hurley would make a significant contribution given her work on the impact of different cultural expectations on the educational experiences of students at the institutional level. In contrast to Hurley’s consideration of students of color at majority White institutions, Elliott Hammer examines cross-racial teaching from a unique perspective. He—a White male teacher at a predominantly Black university—surveyed students about their experiences with faculty and applied many of the concepts from the stereotyping and prejudice literature to his findings.

Questions about the interactions between people sit at the heart of social psychology. Johnmarshall Reeve asks and answers such questions in the context of interpersonal motivation. In particular, how do teachers motivate students? He draws from self-determination theory, and his extensive work with educators at all levels, to advocate for autonomy supportive classrooms.

As with the study of stereotyping and interpersonal interaction, attitudes likewise are a cornerstone of social psychology. Thus, we wanted to include some research examining the influence of attitudes on behaviors in higher education settings. Jessica Clevering’s work on help-seeking seemed like a perfect fit. She found that attitudes about asking for help, more so than help-seeking behaviors, are related to academic achievement.

Although not a social psychologist, Diane Halpern is a recognized expert on learning and teaching. She has been a leader in expanding the scholarship of teaching and learning, and applying theories and tools from our content disciplines to student learning and educational experiences. We knew her contributions would both energize the discussion and offer a prime example of how to “do” the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Building on his expertise in academic self-concept and quantitative methodologies, John Hattie tackles a fascinating predicament in the teaching and learning literature: evidence exists demonstrating the efficacy of most all educational interventions. Yet, as all students know, not all teachers or forms of instruction are equally effective. With an eye toward pinpointing the elements of effective teaching, Hattie offers a synthesis of over 800 meta-analytic studies to identify teaching strategies that result in the greatest gain in student achievement.

One topic we knew would be of value to readers is that of assessment. In the current academic climate, all faculty are exposed to issues related to assessment,

and many are resistant. Can social psychology speak to this faculty resistance? We asked Dana Dunn to explore this question.

Finally, we wanted a capstone chapter to wrap up or summarize the entire volume. We wanted someone with a broad view on the empirical literature and its potential for enhancing teaching and learning. We needed someone who could see the big picture, someone who was familiar with the scholarship of teaching and learning, but also had social psychological expertise. Of course, Randy Smith came to mind. As the editor for *Teaching of Psychology* for 12 years, he was exactly who we needed. His critical eye and keen insights led to a capstone chapter that is both useful and inspiring.

Of course, there were many others who have important work that would have made a great contribution to this volume (for instance, Joshua Aronson's work on stereotype threat, Carol Dweck's work on implicit theories, Don Forsythe's work on groups, to name a few). When one really starts to examine the field of social psychology, almost all of it has implications for teachers. What important territory for social psychologists to explore!

## **An Emerging Sub-Discipline?**

We hope this volume spurs what we see as an emerging sub-discipline within social psychology: the social psychology of teaching and learning. By empirically testing classroom practices using methodology from social psychology, the scholarship of teaching and learning becomes more relevant, more useful, and more scholarly. Classrooms and campuses provide real-world settings for testing social psychological theories, thus this emerging sub-discipline promises to enhance the discipline itself while also enhancing the pursuits that sit at the center of institutions of higher education: teaching and learning.

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# How Can Social Psychology Galvanize Teaching and Learning?

*Regan A. R. Gurung & Kathleen C. Burns*

Psychology instructors are lucky people. Social psychologists are particularly lucky. Psychology in general is fun to teach, but social psychology truly takes it up many notches. Social psychology is the study of how we are influenced by other people and the situations we find ourselves in. Is there a more relevant area to help study how teachers and the learning environment can influence learning? Some introductory instructors often move the social psychology section to early in the semester to grab their students' attention. Others look forward to the social psychology segment at semester's end to provide a booster shot of adrenaline to tired students. Social psychology is captivating, exciting, often counter-intuitive, and *vastly underutilized* in the very context where it is first exposed to students—the classroom. Whereas researchers have successfully used social psychology to tackle many contemporary problems (e.g., Abu Ghraib, Zimbardo, 2007; implicit prejudice, Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998), social psychology's potential contributions to teaching and learning have not been sufficiently mined. There is a sizable literature in the general area of scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) but little of this literature explicitly capitalizes on social psychological theories or is firmly grounded in theory at all (Hutchings, 2007). There are also many books that provide teaching tips (e.g., Davis, 2009) or offer advice on how to face challenges of teaching (e.g., Palmer, 2007), but these books only implicitly (if at all) draw on the richness of social psychology as it pertains to the classroom. This volume should begin the process to rectify these wrongs. In this chapter we set the stage for the launching of a new area, the *social psychology of teaching and learning*. First, we provide a brief history of the general area of SoTL. Then we review the scope of the field of social psychology. Finally, we review existing social psychological forays into SoTL and directly link key areas of social psychology to teaching and learning.



We hope the latter provides a valuable heuristic to optimize teaching and learning as well as to guide future research in this arena.

## What is SoTL?

Over the past few years there has been much said about what to call research done on one's teaching. The most commonly used phrase is the *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, more often referred to by its acronym SoTL (though the pronunciation of said acronym varies as one moves across the globe). We define SoTL as *intentional, systematic reflections on teaching and learning resulting in peer-reviewed products made public*.

In addition to SoTL, one also may hear terms such as *Scholarly Teaching* and *Pedagogical Research*. A scholarly teacher is someone who intentionally and systematically reflects on and modifies her teaching to enhance student learning (evaluating whether enhancement took place). A scholarly teacher who shares the evidence collected in a peer-reviewed public format, presentation, or publication, is doing what is traditionally referred to as SoTL. If the person does not share their findings it is still scholarly teaching. Pedagogical research (PR) (Gurung & Schwartz, 2009) is a more general term that captures the essence of scholarly work conducted to enhance teaching and advance learning. PR encompasses SoTL and scholarly teaching, and does not imply the results are published or presented (a key part of being labeled SoTL) but by the same token implies a rigorous methodological investigation that goes beyond scholarly teaching. For more on definitional quibbles, the interested reader is urged to peruse Irons and Buskist (2008), Pan (2009), or Smith (2008).

In this chapter we opt for the more general term, pedagogical research, in our discussion as it has less of the negative connotations often associated with the term SoTL (e.g., "SoTL is not real research"). The bottom line is that when one is investigating one's own teaching and one's own students' learning, universities and disciplinary departments tend to see the work as falling under the realm of teaching but are beginning to recognize the work as scholarship (or research versus teaching). Some have argued that pedagogical research of this sort should be seen as part as one's professional responsibility as a teacher (Bernstein & Bass, 2005). Whereas this is not the venue to debate this particular issue further, we hope that the use of the term pedagogical research will make this form of scholarship more likely to be taken as seriously as research on other topics. In addition, we support its consideration as another indicator of excellent teaching. Research is only one part of what we do as educators in academic settings. We all teach. We all step into classrooms (or virtual realities if teaching online) and help quasi-captive audiences of our students to learn a little something of what we know and what we have jurisdiction over. Those who teach hence carry a great responsibility. It is upon

them we rely to convey the basics about our various disciplines. How do we know if the students are learning? Beyond the simple rubric of exam grades and appreciative nods of understanding lies the challenge we all face as teachers. The challenge is to establish that our teaching is working and our students are learning. Pedagogical research (PR) helps face this challenge. There are other reasons to do PR as well. PR increases our understanding of how and why people learn, gathers evidence of productive teaching and learning, and develops more effective ways to help learners learn better (it is also fun and helps solve vexing mysteries such as “Why did that class go so badly?”).

## A Brief History of a Movement

Although the term SoTL is a somewhat relative newcomer to the scene, people have been thinking about how to improve teaching and learning for centuries. As Kuh (2004) notes, this “new” line of research, is really a new spin on what researchers in certain fields of study have focused on for decades. It is time for a short excursion into the history of pedagogical research.

In a history of the field of educational psychology, Berliner (2006) traces the modern trend of thinking about individual differences, development, the nature of the material being taught, problem solving, and assessment, to the ancient Jewish rite of the Passover. The leader of the Passover service told the story of the Passover each year but differently to each of his sons according to the sons’ own specific aptitudes. This reflects the modern day trend to focus on individual students’ learning styles. Plato and Aristotle are said to discuss such topics as the role of the teacher, the relations between teacher and student, and the means and methods of teaching (Wason, 1960). Writers down the centuries from the Roman Quintilian (1st century), Juan Luis Vives (15th century), Comenius, Herbart (18th century), to the philosopher Joseph Schwab (1973) have also addressed education (Berliner, 2006). Education psychologists have identified a “father of research on teaching,” Joseph Mayer Rice (1912) who conducted empirical classroom-based research and a “grandfather,” William James (1842–1910) who was asked to present Cambridge educators with lectures on the new psychology (*Talks to Teachers on Psychology*, 1899). Other psychologists have tackled education. G. Stanley Hall, the first president of the American Psychological Association was professor of psychology and pedagogy at Johns Hopkins University. John Dewey, like Hall, was a former classroom teacher who respected the complexity of teaching and also contributed greatly to the methodological study of education (Dewey, 1910).

SoTL catapulted into the national higher education consciousness in 1990. It is not that this type of work did not exist before then, but Boyer’s (1990) *Scholarship reconsidered* catalyzed extensive examination of the work done on teaching and

learning and flexed the political muscle of organizations such as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The results are staggering. Today enough universities and colleges pay attention to SoTL that books document how the scholarship of teaching and pedagogical research is fostered nationwide (O'Meara & Rice, 2005) and numerous international conferences convene yearly to advance the field.

It has been 20 years since *Scholarship reconsidered* was published and today SoTL is a well-known phrase driving multiple national and international organizations such as the International Alliance for Teaching Scholars (IATS) and the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL). Labels are empowering entities and having a phrase such as SoTL with its conferences and journals has helped further this form of research. Akin to the political force, visibility, and ownership that the politically correct terms such as Asian American and African American gave members of the related ethnic groups, SoTL has provided faculty interested in pedagogical research with a unifying banner to organize around. With the publicizing of the phrase SoTL in response to Boyer and subsequent work of his Carnegie colleagues (e.g., Shulman and Hutchings) among others, this type of research has only been recently recognized in most disciplines as a legitimate area of scholarship, worthy of recognition equal to that of more traditional lines of research and inquiry.

## Champions of PR-Working Across Disciplines

There are many champions of SoTL. Since 1905, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has carried out a wide range of activities and research that has helped to support and advance the work of teachers at all levels. In 1997, the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) was established when Lee Shulman became president of the Carnegie Foundation. The *Lilly Foundation* has long been a supporter of teaching enhancement and has been funding faculty scholars nationwide since the 1970s. It also supports an international as well as four national conferences around America. More recently, academic institutions have taken on the mantle of leader by starting up specialized journals. A recent example is the *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (IJSOTL)*, a peer-reviewed electronic journal published twice a year by the Center for Excellence in Teaching at Georgia Southern University whose first issue hit the electronic airwaves in January 2007.

Others who have greatly contributed to pedagogical research are not linked to foundations such as the Carnegie and Lilly foundations. Maryellen Weimer for example, one time associate director of the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, and editor of the *Teaching Professor* newsletter on college teaching, has greatly helped guide and foster pedagogical research

(see Menges, Weimer, & Associates, 1996; Weimer, 2006). Going beyond the previously discussed traditional sources, it is important also to include a look at how SoTL is done outside America. For example Hounsell and Entwistle spearhead the British Enhancing Teaching and Learning (ETL) Project which seeks to develop subject-specific conceptual frameworks to guide institutional and faculty or departmental development of teaching-learning environments. This group has developed a number of useful tools for pedagogical research and has also mapped out key variables that influence learning (see Entwistle, 2009 for a review).

## Champions of PR-Discipline-Specific Activity

The disciplines whose names exemplify the topic of interest, Education and Educational Psychology, provide wonderful starting points for a look at how to examine teaching and learning. In addition, many other disciplines and a work of a wide array of scholars (e.g., Calder in history, Hake and Hestenes in physics, McKinney in sociology, Nelson in biology) have conducted research on teaching and learning. PR in various disciplines has been taking place for more time than many may imagine and is 'more widespread than one may have imagined. In a recent review of the history and diversity of pedagogical research, Weimer (2006) notes that almost all the major disciplines have pedagogical journals. In perhaps one of the most comprehensive listing of publication outlets for pedagogical research, Weimer's work clearly shows that if one is interested in learning more about how to optimize teaching and learning, there are many places to look (e.g., *Journal of College Science Teaching*; *Active Learning in Higher Education*).

As a testament to the (mostly unknown) longevity of pedagogical research, the earliest journal articles on teaching and learning were published back in 1924 with the first edition of the *Journal of Chemical Education*, a publication still in press today. Many of the journals that began a long time ago started as newsletters (e.g., *Teaching of Psychology*) and conversely, many pedagogical publications are not "published" on paper at all. There are a number of outlets that exist in the electronic World Wide Web only.

An example of the extent to which different disciplines are doing PR can also be seen in *Exploring signature pedagogies: Approaches to teaching disciplinary habits of mind* (Gurung, Chick, & Haynie, 2009). Authors in each chapter in this collection first provide a description of the unique content and characteristic pedagogies in their disciplines. What pedagogies are most often used in the classrooms of the field? They then review and evaluate the pedagogical research related to their discipline, paying special attention to how faculty collect evidence of effective teaching and learning and highlighting what future pedagogical research is