INSPIRATION TO ACTION:
USING PROGRAM THEORY TO ENHANCE LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

Andrea M. Pope
Samantha Gonzalez
Chris Patterson

The Center For Assessment & Research Studies
James Madison University
THE ASSESSMENT CYCLE

Specify Student Learning Outcomes

- Use Results to Make Informed Changes to Program
- Create & Map Programming to Outcomes
- Select/Design Instruments
- Collect Outcomes Information
- Analyze Data and Report Results
- Use Results to Make Informed Changes to Program
THE ASSESSMENT CYCLE

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THE ASSESSMENT CYCLE

1. Specify Student Learning Outcomes
2. Create & Map Programming to Outcomes
3. Collect Outcomes Information
4. Analyze Data and Report Results
5. Select/Design Instruments
6. Use Results to Make Informed Changes to Program

The cycle then repeats.
BARRIERS TO ASSESSMENT FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Value for Assessment
- Assessment Knowledge & Skills
- Time & Resources to Engage in Assessment
BARRIERS TO ASSESSMENT FOR IMPROVEMENT

Why should the programming result in the intended outcomes?

Program Theory
“the construction of a plausible and sensible model of how a program is supposed to work” (Bickman, 1987, p. 5)
OVERVIEW

1. The Importance of Program Theory
   - The link between program theory and assessment

2. The Importance of Theory & Research
   - Articulating strong program theory

3. Program Theory in Three Steps
   - Using simple logic models to describe how programs work

4. Program Theory in Practice
   - Three realistic examples of program theory articulation
The purpose of program theory is to identify the mechanisms by which we believe an educational intervention should work.
PROGRAM THEORY AND ASSESSMENT

No Program Theory

Some Program Theory

Extensive Program Theory
THE IMPORTANCE OF THEORY & RESEARCH
STRONG VS. WEAK PROGRAM THEORY

Weak Program Theory
Based on hunches and untested assumptions.

Strong Program Theory
Based on theory and research.
THE IMPORTANCE OF THEORY & RESEARCH

Content-Specific Theory & Research

Science of Teaching & Learning

Motivation Theory & Research
PROGRAM THEORY IN ACTION

A Three-Step Model
1. IDENTIFY AN APPROPRIATE DISTAL OUTCOME

A *distal outcome* articulates **the ultimate goal of your program**. It answers the question: if the program were successful, what would be the mid- to long-term impact(s) on students/the university/other relevant stakeholders?
1. IDENTIFY AN APPROPRIATE DISTAL OUTCOME

A
Increase the % of students who abstain from drinking.

B
Reduce incidences of high-risk drinking.
1. IDENTIFY AN APPROPRIATE DISTAL OUTCOME

A

Increase the % of students who abstain from drinking.

B

Reduce incidences of high-risk drinking.

2. SPECIFY INTERMEDIATE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Intermediate SLOs articulate *how your program will achieve the distal outcome*. They answer the question: what specific knowledge, attitudes, skills, and/or behaviors will the program cultivate to help achieve the distal outcome identified in Step 1?
2. SPECIFY INTERMEDIATE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

*Distal Outcome: Reduce incidences of high-risk drinking.

A
Increase students’ knowledge of the physical effects of drinking.

B
Increase students’ knowledge of drinking norms on campus.
2. SPECIFY INTERMEDIATE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

*Distal Outcome: Reduce incidences of high-risk drinking.

A

Increase students’ knowledge of the physical effects of drinking.

B

Increase students’ knowledge of drinking norms on campus.

(e.g., Smith, et al. (2019). Genes, roommates and residence halls: A multidimensional study of the role of peer drinking on college students’ alcohol use. Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research.)
3. DEVELOP SPECIFIC PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Program components are the activities, discussions, presentations, materials, etc. that comprise your program. Each component should be intentionally designed to help students achieve the intermediate SLOs specified in Step 2.
3. DEVELOP SPECIFIC PROGRAM COMPONENTS

*Intermediate Outcome: Increase students’ knowledge of drinking norms on campus.

A
Hang posters with facts about drinking norms around the residence halls.

B
Give students personalized feedback about their levels of consumption vs. their peers.
3. DEVELOP SPECIFIC PROGRAM COMPONENTS

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SUMMING IT UP WITH A LOGIC MODEL

Program Component(s) → Intermediate Student Learning Outcome(s) → Distal Outcome
1. IDENTIFY AN APPROPRIATE DISTAL OUTCOME

Program Component(s) → Intermediate Outcome(s) → Distal Outcome

- Personalized Feedback
- Increase Knowledge of Drinking Norms
- Decrease High-Risk Drinking

(Marlatt & Witkiewitz, 2002)
2. SPECIFY INTERMEDIATE SLOS

Program Component(s) → Intermediate Outcome(s) → Distal Outcome

- Personalized Feedback → Increase Knowledge of Drinking Norms → Decrease High-Risk Drinking

(Smith, et al., 2019)
3. DEVELOP SPECIFIC PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Program Component(s)  Intermediate Outcome(s)  Distal Outcome

Personalized Feedback  Increase Knowledge of Drinking Norms  Decrease High-Risk Drinking

(Walters, Bennett, & Noto, 2000)
BONUS! STEP 4: EVALUATING PROGRAM

If you’ve used theory/research in your program development process, it makes assessment easy (well, easier).

- Specify SLOs: Provides a roadmap
- Data Collection: You’ll know exactly what to measure
- Interpretation of Results: If the program doesn’t work, you’ll have clear hypotheses about what went wrong
EXAMPLE 1: INEFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING

**Program Component(s)**
- Personalized Feedback

**Intermediate Outcome(s)**
- Increase Knowledge of Drinking Norms

**Distal Outcome**
- Decrease High-Risk Drinking

X
EXAMPLE 2: PROBLEMATIC SLOS

- **Program Component(s):** Personalized Feedback
- **Intermediate Outcome(s):** Increase Knowledge of Drinking Norms
- **Distal Outcome:** Decrease High-Risk Drinking
ETHICAL REASONING IN ACTION (ERIA)

Desired SLO: Students will act ethically

Experts in ethical reasoning, philosophy, & assessment engaged in multi-year endeavor to:

▪ Articulate what students need to know, think, & do to act ethically
▪ Design programming to impact these outcomes
▪ Design measures of these outcomes
▪ Assess SLOs
▪ Use results for learning improvement
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By engaging in a deliberate ethical reasoning thought process, students’ avoid a quick, default, confirmatory decision on how to behave.
In their own personal lives, students will evaluate courses of action based on a number of considerations (i.e., 8 KQs.

Measure: ER-WR: PA of responses to personal ethical dilemma & apply KQs

For a hypothetical ethical dilemma, students will evaluate courses of action by applying (weighing & balancing) a number of considerations (i.e., 8 KQs).

Measure: Ethical Reasoning Writing Essay (ER-WR: PA of responses to hypothetical dilemma & apply KQs)

When given a specific decision & rationale on an ethical issue, students will correctly identify the KQ most consistent with the decision & rationale (simple & complex scenarios)

Measure: Ethical Reasoning Identification Test (ERIT: 50 MC choose KQ most appropriate)

Students will explain each KQs

Measure: Ethical Reason Recall Test (ERRT: constructed response asking to state & explain KQs)

Students will state, from memory, the 8 KQs

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According to Perry's Scheme of Ethical Development, traditional students are dualistic thinkers conceiving ethical decisions as right or wrong. To engage in a deliberative ethical reasoning process, we need to expose students to multiple considerations associated with a decision. We teach them eight key ethical considerations (8KQs):

- Fairness
- Outcomes
- Responsibilities
- Character
- Liberty
- Empathy
- Authority
- Rights

The magic of “doing the right thing” is found in the quality of your questions.

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When given a specific decision & rationale on an ethical issue, students will correctly identify the KQ most consistent with the decision & rationale (simple & complex scenarios)
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The Eight Key Questions

Act Ethically
Intermediate Outcome(s)

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Distal Outcome

Act Ethically
Applying All Eight Key Questions

According to Gilligan’s Ethics of Care Theory, female students tend to favor fairness and empathy, whereas male students tend to favor authority and rights.

We teach them how to evaluate each 8KQ consideration, weigh/balance the 8KQs, and come to a decision.
Distal Outcome

In their own personal lives, students will evaluate courses of action based on a number of considerations (i.e., 8 KQs)
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Distal Outcome

Act Ethically
ERIA PROGRAM THEORY

Program Component(s)  Intermediate Outcome(s)  Distal Outcome

Orientation, Peer Workshops, Course Interventions  Ability to Engage in a Deliberate Ethical Reasoning Process  Act Ethically
Distal Outcome

Intermediate Outcome(s)

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Act Ethically

**Programming**

**Orientation Intervention**
- All incoming students
- “The One Book”: 8 KQs are introduced
- “Its Complicated”: Faculty & staff facilitate discussions of ethical scenario with 30 students

**Peer Workshops**
- At request of faculty
- Re-enforce knowledge of 8KQs through recall exercises
- Discuss why certain KQs remembered over others

**Course Interventions**
General education and program faculty use the 8KQ framework to help students reason through realistic ethical scenarios.
**Intermediate Outcome(s)**

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**Distal Outcome**

- Act Ethically
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Act Ethically
Gilligan’s Ethics of Care Theory

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Distal Outcome

Perry’s Scheme of Cognitive Development

Kahneman

Act Ethically

Gilligan’s Ethics of Care Theory
Rebound: Rising Stronger from Setbacks
Long Term Outcomes

Grit (to persevere)  
Martin & Marsh (2006)

Resilience (to bounce back)

Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews & Kelly (2007)

Distal Outcome
Retention

Davey, Eaker & Walters (2003); Ungar (2004); Thornton & Sanchez (2010)
Intermediate Outcomes

- **Growth Mindset**
  - (belief that our abilities are malleable)

- **Self-Efficacy**
  - (confidence in accomplishing a behavior or action)

Long Term Outcomes

- **Grit**
  - (to persevere)

  - *Duckworth (2016)*

  - *Nussbaum & Dweck (2004)*

- **Resilience**
  - (to bounce back)

  - *Vuong, Brown-Wetly & Tracz (2010)*

  - *Martin & Marsh (2006)*

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*Vuong, Brown-Wetly & Tracz (2010)*
Programming

JMU One Book
- Rebound Videos
- Grit TedTalk
- Growth Mindset videos/readings

Summer Springboard
- Growth Mindset 1-hour workshop
- Self-Efficacy 1-hour workshop

1787 Workshops
- Help-seeking 1-hour workshop
- Self-talk 1-hour workshop
- Growth Mindset 1-hour workshop

1787: Final Event
- Rebound Videos
- VP Presentation

Growth Mindset
(belief that our abilities are malleable)

Self-Efficacy
(confidence in accomplishing a behavior or action)

Nussbaum & Dweck (2004)
Halpern & Hakel (2003)
McConville & Lane (2006); Bandura (1994)
Bautista (2017); McConville & Lane (2006); Bandura (1994)
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A CLOSER LOOK

JMU One Book
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Growth Mindset
(belief that our abilities are malleable)

Self-Efficacy
(confidence in accomplishing a behavior or action)
WHAT DO STUDENTS LIKE TO DO?

HAVE SEX
Distal Outcome

Students will engage in sexually-safer behaviors
**Short-Term Outcomes**

- Differentiate between viral and bacterial STIs
- Differentiate between low- and high-risk sexual behaviors
- Recall proper sequence of putting on a condom
- Identify campus resources for sexual health care
- Differentiate between high- and low-risk attitudes toward STI transmission
- Identify methods to communicate sexual boundaries

- Know STI Risks
- Know when to get tested
- Access to Safer Sex Supplies

**Distal Outcome**

Students will engage in sexually-safer behaviors
**Short-Term Outcomes**

- K5. Compare high- and low-risk sexual behaviors
- S1. Put on a condom
- K6. List 2+ campus resources for sexual health
- S2. Confidently communicate sexual boundaries with partners
- K3. Describe the short-and long-term effects of STIs
- K7. Name where to go on campus for safe sex supplies
- K1. State the rates of certain STIs at JMU
- K4. Describe the benefits of using a condom
- K2. Name places on the body where one can contract an STI

**Intermediate Outcomes**

- P1. Students will increase their perception of their susceptibility to contracting an STI
- P2. Students will increase their perception of the severity of STIs
- P3. Students will increase their perception of the benefits to performing safe-sex behaviors
- P4. Students will increase their perception of access to safe-sex supplies and information
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Distal Outcome

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Champion & Skinner (2008)
Bandura (1992)
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K8. Name where to go on campus for safe sex supplies

S1. Put on a condom
S2. Confidently communicate sexual boundaries with partners

Programs:
- New Student Orientation
- STIs 101
- Relationships 101
- Sextacular
- Coaching
- Testing Event

Activities:
- Students learn about various risks for STI transmission to various areas of the body
- Students will see STI statistics at JMU
- Students learn about the different kinds and uses of condoms
- Students meet with a professional staff member to discuss sexual health behaviors
- Students will get tested for STIs
Intermediate Outcomes

P1. Students will increase their perception of their susceptibility to contracting an STI

P2. Students will increase their perception of the severity of STIs

P3. Students will increase their perception of the benefits to performing safe-sex behaviors

P4. Students will increase their perception of access to safe-sex supplies and information

P5. Students will increase their self-efficacy to carry out safe-sex behaviors

Distal Outcome

Students will engage in sexually-safer behaviors
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**Distal Outcome**

Students will engage in sexually-safer behaviors
Before beginning your application, we encourage you to review the examples of completed applications below. These mock applications should help clarify what kind of information we are looking for in each section. If you still have questions about the application, or if you would like to receive feedback on your application prior to submission, please schedule an appointment to meet with a SASS consultant or email SASS Faculty Lead, Sara Finney (finney@jmu.edu).