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Affective Learning: Evolving from Values and Planned Behaviors to Internalization and Pervasive Behavioral Change

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What Is Affective Learning?

Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1964) argue for five specific levels of affective learning: (1) receiving (awareness/willingness to attend to an instructional message), (2) responding (willingness to respond and/or actively engage instruction), (3) valuing (seeing the significance of a particular behavior, idea, object, or phenomenon.), (4) organizing (comparing and contrasting competing value systems in an effort to relate and synthesize values), and (5) characterization by a value or value set (value system, characteristic life style). However, most discussions of affective learning either discuss all five levels together or simply evaluate levels 2 and 3 (e.g., McCroskey, 1994; Messman & Jones-Corley, 2001). Krathwohl et al.'s (1964) model of affective learning does an excellent job of explaining the process of affect in the initial stages and the long-term, life aspects of affective learning. However, these larger, more internal value-driven factors are rarely discussed in communication literature.

What we have failed to focus on, in the field of communication, is the aspect of affective learning referred to as the characterization of values or value set that persists over time and that pervades all aspects of life (Krathwohl et al., 1964). We can safely assume that teachers wish to evoke long-term change in their students. In addition, teachers likely have a desire for the students to act on the values or value sets emerging from a given content area. Affective learning is a construct that allows teachers to verify that indeed they have inspired their students and possibly evolved their students, though teachers rarely have the opportunity to see the long-term effects associated with their teaching.

The time has come for definitions of affective learning in instructional communication to evolve. A more evolved definition will acknowledge changes in the student

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value set and subsequent behavioral changes. In other words, communication scholars must begin to define affective learning in terms of internalized values that will be applied outside of the learning environment over an extended period of time. The value of the instructional communication area would be significantly increased if scholars are able to demonstrate that instructional communication variables lead to long-term changes in students. Thus, we propose the following definition of affective learning as an extension of the definitions put forth by Kearney, Plax, and Wendt-Wasco (1985) and Krathwohl et al. (1964). Affective learning refers to an individual's positive disposition toward a particular subject matter, which changes an individual's operational framework and value system thus guiding decision making and behavioral choices in all aspects of life.

How Should We Measure Affective Learning in Instructional Communication Research?

Affective learning should be viewed as multidimensional with a series of measures that tackle various aspects of the construct. As communication scholars, we must begin to measure the internal value changes that persist long after the learning event occurs. We agree that current measures of affective learning are well suited to measuring our current conceptualization of affective learning. However, our measures and methodologies do not account for Krathwohl et al.'s dimension of affective learning referred to as "characterization of internal values or value sets" (or Kearney et al.'s, 1985 internalization). We believe that a measure must be developed to examine the larger, more value-driven themes discussed by Krathwohl et al. (1964).

We generally think of (and measure in research studies) how affective learning exists at a single point in time that is concurrent with the learning event. As scholars, we must challenge ourselves to measure affective learning over the course of a lifetime and to measure how pervasive the subject matter is within an individual's operational framework and internal value system. Communication researchers must now shift their approaches to study affective learning at various points in time *after* the learning event occurs. More specifically, we need to begin to understand whether known correlates of the aspects of affective learning that are currently measured (levels 2 and 3) such as teacher immediacy, clarity and credibility lead to internalized values that are applied outside of the classroom over an extended period of time.

The design of the proposed method must necessarily rely on participant recall, but we would argue that participant recall is a strength in the proposed measurement strategy, as it indicates true internalization. To measure this more sophisticated level of affective learning, scholars may ask participants to recall a course taught by a teacher with whom they felt psychologically close (immediacy) or whose content was particularly clear (clarity). We would propose that the length of time from the learning event could range from months to years. In keeping with current measurement trends, participants will be asked to report on multiple dimensions of affective learning (affect toward content, affect toward behaviors recommended in the course, and affect toward instructor). In addition, and great emphasis is placed on

this addition, communication scholars must measure affective learning in relation to whether course content has been incorporated into an individual's operational framework and value system as indicated by decisions grounded in the course content and behavioral choices that are driven by the content.

The following example is proposed. Participants may recall a professor of nonverbal communication who was immediate and clear. If the professor achieved affective learning, then theoretically students should have incorporated knowledge of the effects of perceived attractiveness into their value set and will use this knowledge in raising children (teaching children about accepting differences in appearance), relationships in the workplace (evaluating subordinates objectively regardless of appearance), decisions in the workplace (hiring practices), interpersonal relationships (accepting weight gain in peers), etc. In other words, we must ask: is the former student's behavior outside of the classroom guided by content learned affectively, and for how long? If affective learning is truly about internalization then affectively learned content should impact multiple aspects of an individual's life, over time, and thus must be measured in these terms.

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Reclaiming affective learning

Amy L. Housley Gaffney & Deanna P. Dannels

For teachers and scholars in academia, a good day is often measured by what we know and how we share what we know. Yet, education has changed. And, as argued

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