Learning to Articulate One's Professional Philosophy:
Use of The Warrior Exam

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Introduction

Testing is one component of the education process where students and faculty can find common ground: it is usually stressful, often unfair and occasionally unnecessary. Petress (2004) identified examinations as one of college's "most anxiety producing events" and reflected on why tests are necessary. He listed eight outcomes of examinations, including synthesis, integration, differentiation, application and evaluation. These are lofty goals for what is frequently viewed as a burden. Perhaps the difficulty is that many faculty have no experience in test design and most students have too much experience in taking unfair tests. Rarely do faculty take as much time to prepare a test as they do to prepare teaching materials and students rarely view test taking as anything other than a transient event on the way to a grade. Is there however an alternative? Is it possible to design a test that requires students to synthesize, integrate, differentiate, apply and evaluate material? Is it possible to challenge students through the testing process while using the test not solely as an evaluative tool but also as a learning tool? We believe so. The purpose of this article is to describe a unique approach to testing used with our therapeutic recreation students.

Our concern with effective testing methods was also fueled by the voices of educators in therapeutic recreation. Over the past decade many educators have expressed concern as to the most effective means of preparing students for entry into a demanding and ever-changing work force, particularly within health care (e.g., Finegan, 2006; Kinney & Witman, 1997; Voelkl, 2004). In the proceedings from the 2005 Therapeutic Recreation Education Conference (Carter & Folkerth, 2006), numerous authors voiced the need and importance in preparing students to serve as advocates for the profession. More specifically, Finegan suggested that educators "Teach students how to become better communicators, self-promoters and advocates of their roles and of the TR profession." (2006, p. 126). Murray and Coyle boldly stated that educators must begin to "Incorporate professional advocacy training within

the curriculum…" (2006, p. 156). Given these recommendations, we discussed how we could use the exam process as another opportunity to further enhance students' abilities and confidence in articulating their philosophies, beliefs, and definitions of therapeutic recreation.

At Clemson University all undergraduate students majoring in therapeutic recreation are required to enroll in a senior-level Therapeutic Recreation Trends and Issues class. A major portion of the class, approximately 20%, focuses on philosophy and ethics. Students write a professional philosophy paper as the final assignment for this class. Even with the emphasis placed on reading and articulating one's professional philosophy, over a number of years students have continued to express a lack of confidence when articulating their philosophies. Therefore, in the fall of 2006, we added a new component to TR Trends and Issues. We incorporated the Warrior Exam as the method for the final exam (Grossenbacher & Parkin, 2006).

Description of Activity

The Warrior Exam is based on an oral examination format that is used extensively at Naropa University. The notion of warrior "…refers to the willingness of students to face courageously and nonaggressively whatever fear may arise when challenged to speak authentically to a group." (Grossenbacher & Parkin, 2006, p. 6). The exam involves students sitting in a circle. Each student has the opportunity to be a 'warrior' and answer a question that is drawn out of a bowl as well as serve as 'examiner' and ask the warrior questions about his or her response. The benefits of this approach stem from students "…speaking one's best thoughts in the presence of others, examinees develop a genuine confidence in themselves." (Grossenbacher & Parkin, p. 6). Detailed information on how to conduct a Warrior Exam is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Warrior Exam (from Grossenbacher & Parkin, 2006, pp. 12-13)

How to Conduct a Warrior Exam*
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Introduction
A warrior exam is an oral examination in which each student is asked a single question. A ceremonial atmosphere helps transmute the naturally arising nervous energy into a highly charged opportunity for respectful learning. (Once the basic form of this exam is understood, any number of viable variations may present themselves, as suited to the course content, etc.)

Table 1. Warrior Exam (continued)

Distribute Sample Exam Questions

Two weeks prior to the exam, your may distribute a list of about two dozen questions to the students to guide their preparation. Depending on the desired level of exam difficulty, you could either inform students that these are the exact questions that will appear on the exam, or the advance questions could simply be example questions that may differ to some degree from the actual exam questions.

Schedule the Examination Period

Two hours is the ideal time period for examining up to about one dozen students, allowing for responses ranging from 5 to 10 minutes in duration. It is possible to examine this many students in one hour, thought this introduces a factor of time pressure in that students must restrict their response to no more than 4 minutes. In this case, it may be expedient for you, rather than a student, to serve as Questioner. Of course, briefer periods may be used, but pursuit of efficiency can trade off with supportive calmness.

Materials Needed

3 bowls or similar containers: 2 for students' names, 1 for questions

List of exam questions, spaced 2 per page, for taking notes on students' responses

2 lists of students' names, cut into slips and folded, one name per slip

1 list of exam questions, cut into slips and folded, one question per slip

Set Up

Arrange a circle of seats, one for each student plus one for you. Place two additional seats facing each other in the middle of the circle about four or five feet apart, positioned so that your seat in the perimeter circle is at angel sixty-to-ninety degrees relative to the axis that runs through both center seats. This allows you to see and hear the Examinee adequately without directly facing the Examinee (so as to minimize possible intimidation).

Place two bowls within reach of the Examinee's seat, one for names and the other for exam questions. Place one bowl within reach of the Questioner's seat for names

Explain Examination Procedure to Students

Tell students how the exam is to proceed, as follows: Each student gets one turn to be the Examinee, with the order determined by drawing names from this bowl. Each student also gets one turn to be the Questioner, with the order determined by drawing names from this other bowl.

The Examinee plucks his or her question out of the bowl of questions, reads it silently, and then passes it to the questioner to read aloud. Once the question has been stated out loud, the examinee holds forth and shares his or her knowledge and wisdom concerning the specified topic. Once the examinee declares the response is complete (or if a time limit has been reached), the questioner has the option of either asking a follow-up question designed to elicit further information (if time permits), or acceding to the completion by stating "I am satisfied." If the Questioner is a student, it is then left to you to exercise the same option of employing one or more questions to draw more from the Examinee. The exam concludes for the examinee once the instructor declares satisfaction.

Table 1. Warrior Exam (continued)

Respond to the Examinee's Answer

As the Instructor, you should express satisfaction at the conclusion of each student's examination. Declaring "I am satisfied" does not mean that the student has earned an A grade, or even a passing grade. Rather, it means that within the existing time constraints, you are satisfied that you have received about as complete an answer as you can from that student on the question that they selected.

After a response that is so good it knocks your socks off, instead of simply stating that you are satisfied, if time allows, make use of this teachable moment by asking a question that challenges the Examinee and that may allow other students to learn further.

Take Notes During the Exam

Make notes of the particular content in each students' response to ensure that you have an adequate basis for providing subsequent feedback (and grade) to the student. Estimate and jot down the grade earned by each student's performance (which may be subject to later revision based on comparison with other examinations).

Subsequent to the Examination, Provide Written Feedback

In addition to providing the grade earned by the student's exam performance, it is helpful to describe the strengths and/or weaknesses you observed in the student's response so that they understand the basis for the grade they receive. Ideally, all this can be presented to the student in the next class meeting in a brief typed note that includes the exam question they were asked.

We allocated our three-hour final exam period to the Warrior Exam. There were 16 students in the class, therefore each student had up to ten-minutes to articulate his or her response. Examples of the questions used are presented in Table 2. The exam lasted approximately two hours and fifteen minutes. There was a ten minute break at the half-way mark.

Learning Outcomes

Students reported working in small groups to share answers to the questions they were given two-weeks prior to the exam. Students e-mailed answers to one another and then would meet face to face to quiz each other on the various questions. Upon completing the course students indicated that this informal and interactive approach to examining their philosophies aided them in feeling confident when they actually entered the classroom for the Warrior Exam. In addition, students reported enjoying the experience of the Warrior Exam, although they had anticipated it being much more difficult to talk in front of the class than what they experienced. Following the exam, many students stated that they felt they could explain the philosophy underlying therapeutic recreation services if they were called upon to do so.

The warrior exam questions provided students the opportunity to reach several of the examination outcomes identified by Petress (2004). Application requires using

TABLE 2

Examples of Warrior Exam Questions

Topic	Examples of Warrior Exam Questions
Philosophy of Therapeutic Recreation	1. We have examined a leisure-based philosophy of TR and a health/functional outcomes-based philosophy of TR. Describe the 'fit' of each of these two philosophies with the movement towards evidence based practice. Finally, tell us how your personal philosophy of TR fits with evidence based practice. 2. What is meant by "personal autonomy"? How does personal autonomy guide your daily live? What are the conditions necessary for personal autonomy? What does this mean for therapeutic recreation practice? Provide specific examples.
Ethical Standards	3. If Sylvester and Shank & Kinney were sitting in your living room what may they say to one another and to you about the purpose and philosophy of TR/RT? Discuss the ethical dilemmas that each of them may believe CTRSs will face in practice. How would you respond to the ethical issues that they raise?
Therapeutic Recreation Certification	4. What does NCTRC stand for? What are the criteria for professional eligibility? Discuss the importance of professional certification in TR. What are the benefits and limitations of professional certification?
Professional Organizations & Standards	5. Describe our history of professional organizations beginning with the formation of NTRS. According to Van Andel, what were the reasons for the formation of ATRA? What factors would support or hinder a movement to combine ATRA and NTRS into one organization? Which organization would you be most likely to join? Explain.
Clinical & Managerial Supervision	6. You have just been asked to interview for a CTRS position at South Carolina Neuropsychiatric Hospital. When discussing the position with the Director of RT, she tells you that staff therapists receive both clinical and managerial supervision. As you prepare for your interview you decide to brush up on types of supervision. So, tell us what you discovered. What is clinical supervision? managerial supervision? How do they differ? What characteristics would you find in a clinical supervisor?
TR in the Schools & Inclusive Recreation	7. Define 'inclusion' and describe inclusive recreation. Provide an example of an inclusive recreation program. Discuss the barriers and challenges facing CTRSs who provide inclusive recreation experiences for community members with a disability.
TR versus RT?	8. Dr. Wright, the Chair of PRTM, comes to you due to your expertise in TR. He tells you that PRTM is considering changing the name of the emphasis area from TR to Recreational Therapy. He asks: "How do these two terms differ?" "What forces have influenced the increased use of "recreational therapy" during the last few years?" Tell us your response.

what is learned. Question 2 required students to apply knowledge about philosophy to their daily life and the practice of TR. Question 7 asked students to use their knowledge by applying it to a hypothetical situation. <u>Differentiation,</u> the ability to identify nuances and varieties within phenomenon, was required to answer questions 6 and 8. <u>Synthesis,</u> the "ability to see relationships between variables" (p. 521), was inherent in question 1, requiring students to identify the relationship between philosophy and practice. The ability to select parts of a vast array of information provided and use those parts to reach a goal requires <u>integration.</u> Question 3 required an integrative approach since students responded to specific ethical dilemmas by selecting components of ethical practice as they formulated their responses. <u>Evaluation</u> requires that test takers reach judgments about what they learn. Question 5 pushed students to specify which professional organization they would join based on their evaluation of ATRA and NTRS. An appropriate response required a judgment and a rationale for that judgment.   In addition, question 4 asked students to assess the benefits and limitations of certification. Clearly the warrior exam was structured to reach outcomes beyond testing knowledge of the subject and was designed to be educational as well as evaluative.

Recommendations

We recommend that faculty using the Warrior Exam consider a different title for the exam. Many students voiced puzzlement over the term 'warrior' and others voiced a perception of a warrior as an aggressive individual. Although we shared with the students the perspective that "the sense of warriorship here refers to the willingness of students to face courageously and nonaggressively whatever fear may arise when challenged to speak authentically to a group" (Grossenbacher & Parkins, 2006, p. 6), many seemed to maintain an image of aggression when they thought of a warrior. Therefore, in the future we plan to call this experience a "Student Exchange," thereby avoiding the notion of aggression and highlighting the interactive nature of this approach to testing and learning.

One of the challenges inherent in using the Warrior Exam is preparing students to respond 'on the spot'. At Naropa University, where this type of exam is used extensively, students engage in contemplative meditation and gain experience in working with their emotional reactions to life events, such as the Warrior Exam. At Clemson University our students do not engage in contemplative meditation. Therefore, in order to prepare students to handle the stress or anxiety they may experience when being placed 'on the spot,' we engaged in short relaxation exercises on a weekly basis. In addition, we discussed the benefits of learning to respond 'on the spot' by discussing the need for professionals to be ready to talk about one's profession in a variety of situations whether it be in a interdisciplinary team meeting, with a client, or with an administrator. Students reported using the relaxation techniques as they participated in the Warrior Exam.

Overall the use of the Warrior Exam was positive and we will use it again as the final exam in Therapeutic Recreation Trends and Issues. Such an approach to the final exam supports our intent to prepare students to be able to verbally describe the purpose and philosophy of therapeutic recreation once they enter the workforce.

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