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Offering Assessment Autonomy to Graduate Students with a Choice of Paper or Project as a Final Examination

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Abstract: One strategy to foster motivation involves creating worthwhile assessments that are highly engaging, specifically creating assessments that foster autonomy. Assessment autonomy involves the use of choice-based and/or flexible ways in which learners can demonstrate their knowledge, strengths, interests, and/or personal decisions through potentially different types, times, and/or weights of assessments supported with clear expectations. This study seeks to explore graduate students' experiences with one of two assessments, a paper or a project. The participants documented the reasons they chose one format or the other, while also expanding on their experiences. Findings indicate there are benefits to using assessment autonomy, such as the students being able to showcase their strengths and synthesize information for deeper understanding. Findings also suggest that we, as educators, need to be aware of how assessment autonomy could invite more stress and anxiety. This research further connected the tenets of autonomy, competence, and relatedness within self-determination theory.

Keywords: *assessment autonomy, flexible assessment, graduate students, self-determination theory*

Introduction

Graduate school can be incredibly rewarding to help a person advance their knowledge, increase their financial earnings, and influence their career trajectory. However, graduate school is not without challenges. There are many demotivating factors in graduate school. Catama and Tejada (2025) found that demotivating factors in graduate school can be related to 1) personal and psychological obstacles, 2) conflicting responsibilities and time limitations, 3) demanding research procedures and institutional obstacles, and 4) insufficient support systems and resource limitations.

One direction to potentially foster graduate student motivation could involve giving them more assessment autonomy. It is reasonable to suggest that if educators create assessments that allow for more autonomy, the learning and motivation of students can be influenced. Kessells et al. (2024) found that student motivation is impacted when they have autonomy in decision-making. If we want graduate school to be rewarding, we as educators must find ways to make our content more applicable and valuable. Below, I contextualize autonomy as a motivational construct. I also operationalize assessment autonomy within this study.

Purpose and Research Questions

Recognizing that our graduate students have certain needs, I look to investigate graduate students' autonomous motivation or demotivation by studying flexible and/or choice-based assessment. Limited research exists on how graduate students perceive assessment autonomy. This study does not attempt to generalize but rather seeks to explore specific graduate students' experiences with one of two assessments, a paper or a project, to demonstrate their understanding of course content. Implications of this study have the potential to inform evidence-based decisions on more learner-centered assessments in graduate school. To better understand the purpose of this research, I ask two research questions.

Research Question 1: What were the reasons graduate students chose one assessment format over another?

Research Question 2: What were the experiences of graduate students when choosing one assessment over another?

Literature Review

Autonomy

In thinking about assessment autonomy, it is important to contextualize autonomy as a motivational concept. Autonomy is a complex construct that concerns the regulation of behavior by the self as opposed to external forces (Legate & Ryan, 2014). Students experience autonomy in accordance with how much they personally endorse the value and significance of the way of thinking or behaving (Reeve, 2012, pp. 154). As Guay (2021) suggested, autonomy-supportive behaviors encompass behaviors where someone considers the perspective of others, provides them with opportunities to act within certain guidelines, and offers meaningful rationales to explain why they must do less interesting activities.

One motivational theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), explicitly looks at autonomy as one of the major motivating or demotivating factors. Alongside competence and relatedness, autonomy needs should be fulfilled (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000) suggested that a person's motivation and well-being are diminished when those three needs are not met. Within SDT, autonomy is the feeling of control over one's own behavior and goals (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Katz & Assor, 2007). Competence is described as a feeling of being effective and of mastery (Beymer & Thompson, 2015; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Relatedness refers to the sense of belongingness with other individuals (Beymer & Thompson, 2015; Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Thus, when autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs are met, optimal motivation can be achieved. This theory considers an individual person's motivation, while appreciating social factors such as interacting with others. These factors should be considered together to better understand motivation. While this article specifically focuses on assessment autonomy, I will connect assessment autonomy to competence and relatedness in the implications section. This is because there is value in showing how assessment strategies impact all three aspects of motivation.

Assessment Autonomy

Assessment autonomy is a complex endeavor within education that is not so easily classified. For example, one direction of assessment autonomy could involve giving students choices in how they demonstrate their knowledge. Choices could consist of different assignments assigned at the same time, each worth the same number of points. This could potentially relate to giving two assignments or prompts and asking the student to complete one or the other. Thus, the students are still given a level of autonomy through the choices they make. Assessment autonomy might also allow students to complete different assignments at different times, whereby if they reach a total score across the assignments, then a certain grade can be earned. For example, students could have the option to complete five discussions totaling 100 points or ten quizzes totaling 100 points.

Within the literature, terms are often interchanged. Assessment autonomy has sometimes been referred to as flexible assessment. It has also sometimes been referred to as choice-based assessment. In the next section, I highlight literature that uses the terms interchangeably. In doing so, the intention is to demonstrate how assessment autonomy has been used previously.

Flexible and/or Choice-Based Assessments

Kessels et al. (2024) defined flexible assessment as assessments in which the student is offered some choice to support the student's autonomy and in which the student can make their choice independent of the influences of others. The concept of choice-based assessment has been defined as a learner-centered assessment strategy that provides students with choices in what, how, and/or when their learning is assessed (Spiney & Kerr, 2023). By incorporating the use of flexible and/or choice-based assessments, instructors provide students with some element of choice in the type, time, and/or weighting of assessments (Coyne & Woodruff, 2022; Irwin & Hepplestone, 2012; Varsavsky & Rayner, 2012). These types of assessments allow students to focus on their strengths and interests (Duncan & Buskirk-Cohen, 2011; Spinney & Kerr, 2023).

More positive attitudes towards assessments were found when using flexible and/or choice-based assessments (Pacharn et al., 2013). Flexibility can give students increased control over how to demonstrate their understanding of the material and meet the course's learning outcomes (Cowan, 2024). Katz and Assor (2007) found choice to be a motivating factor in studies in which autonomy, competence, and relatedness were satisfied.

Student empowerment was highlighted as a major benefit of these types of assessment schemes (Jopp & Cohen, 2022; Rideout, 2018; Spinney & Kerr, 2023; Wanner et al., 2024). Flexible and/or choice-based assessment options can help students scaffold their learning, encouraging higher-order skills and proactive learning behaviors (Didicher, 2016; Pretorius et al., 2017). Hanewicz et al. (2017) found that providing student choice promoted higher rates of student engagement, which improved exam results and increased student satisfaction. Assessment choice provides a course structure that encourages students to go beyond expectations (Arendt et al., 2016). Reduced stress was also found to be a chief

benefit of flexible and/or choice-based assessments (Coyne & Woodruff, 2022; Edwards, 2020; Hills & Peacock, 2022; Jopp & Cohen, 2022; Pretorius et al., 2017).

However, there needs to be parameters when inviting assessment autonomy. Wanner and Palmer (2015) suggest students want guidelines and frameworks to work within, even when given more choice and control. Patall et al. (2008) found that the number of choices should be limited to between two and five options. If there is an overabundance of options, there may be a decrease in motivation (Cowan, 2024; Diehl & Poynor, 2010; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Scheibehenne et al., 2010). Choice can be stressful and can diminish self-confidence if the chooser is ill-informed of the expectations or is rushed to decide (Paterson & Neufeld, 1995).

Operationalizing Assessment Autonomy

Acknowledging the benefits and drawbacks of flexibility and/or choice, assessment autonomy still has the potential to meet the diverse needs that exist in today's classrooms (Barua & Lockee, 2025). An increasingly diverse student population demands assessment approaches to evolve to be more flexible, equitable, and adaptable (Barua & Lockee, 2024; Barua & Lockee, 2025; Valtonen et al., 2021).

Pulling in definitions and uses from the literature, I wish to give a working definition of assessment autonomy that will be used in this study. Assessment autonomy involves the use of choice-based and/or flexible ways in which learners can demonstrate their knowledge, strengths, interests, and/or personal decisions through potentially different types, times, and/or weights of assessments supported with clear expectations.

Methods

Course Descriptions

To evaluate assessment autonomy, data were collected in one of two graduate-level courses. One course focused on "Theories of Learning" and explored topics including behaviorism, cognitivism, social cognitivism, social constructivism, self-regulation, etc. The second course focused on "Theories of Interaction" and explored learning from a social perspective with greater depth. The course objectives for both courses broadly had students apply theories and see how individual and social factors could affect learning.

Final Exam Options

Within these two courses, students had a choice between two final exam formats. Both options were intended to have the students engage with the course content on a deeper, more meaningful level. With the participants coming from two different courses, there were minor differences in the content that had to be discussed, but negligible differences in the overall assessments.

The first choice involved a paper detailing and applying content from the course. The paper was approximately 2-3 pages in length, asking how they and those they work with use the information from the course. The first choice had more structured parameters because the students had to address each

question on the final exam. Please see Appendix A following the references for the directions/rubric of this assignment.

The second choice involved a project that asked the students to utilize at least six of the 15 modules and create something that demonstrated their knowledge of the content flexibly. For instance, students could write and perform a song, create a graphic novel, create a website, etc. The second choice had more open parameters because the students could demonstrate their knowledge in a way that they deemed fit. Please see Appendix B following the references for the directions/rubric of this assignment.

Thus, the students had two options for their final exam. This supported Patall et al.'s (2008) notion that two and five options could enhance perceived autonomy. Regardless of the option chosen, students could still demonstrate their knowledge of course content through different types of assessment: writing a paper or creating a project. However, the second option expanded the notion of assessment autonomy by connecting the flexibility and interest components.

Data Collection

Following IRB approval, an anonymous Qualtrics survey was administered at the end of the semester to assess the students' experiences with their chosen assessment. The survey took approximately 30 minutes to complete. The survey was optional and did not reflect any graded aspect of the course. Select questions on the survey asked the participants the most and least often ways they were assessed as a graduate student, why they chose the paper or project, and their experiences with their choice. The full survey can be found after the references in Appendix C. The survey consisted of 11 questions, with an additional three questions asked to classroom teachers on how they assessed their students.

Participants

15 out of 35 possible students opted to participate in the study. Those 15 participants completed every question on the survey. With all 15 participants answering every question on the survey, there were no exclusion criteria needed if someone had only partially completed the survey. These participants were enrolled in one of two graduate-level courses taught by the researcher at a mid-sized southeastern University in the United States.

Eight of the 15 participants were classroom teachers, all enrolled as Master's students in various Master's of Education (M.Ed.) degrees. Seven of the eight classroom teachers taught sixth through 12th grade across a variety of disciplines (STEM, math, language arts, science, and SPED). The final classroom teacher taught all subjects in first grade. The other seven participants did not have a teaching background but worked in other settings such as higher education, counseling, or nursing. These seven participants could have been a Master's or a Doctoral student. Because the Qualtrics survey was anonymous, other information is unknown.

Data Analysis

After collecting the data, I read through each participant's responses to the survey. When exploring why people chose an assessment format and their experiences, initial commonalities were explored when five or more participants (1/3 of the total) identified something in common by using the same words or similar words. For instance, if more than five participants used similar enough words, I would begin building connections to fit within a larger theme. After the common words were identified, I also looked at dissimilar words to combat biases. These dissimilar words functioned as disconfirming evidence to show the potential undersides of assessment autonomy.

Once I had a cohesive list of words, I reread the data. On a second read, themes were generated using Braun and Clark's (2006) method of thematic analysis as a guide. Four themes emerged naturally, given the repetition of similar responses from the participants. The themes within "Choosing the Assignment" include: 1) Finding Direction and 2) The Creative Process. The themes related to "Experiences" include: 3) Freedom of Engagement and 4) Stress and Anxiety.

Findings

When exploring the participants' experience with either final exam, 12 of the 15 participants opted to do the project over the paper, despite participants saying papers were the most common assessment used while in graduate school. A variety of reasons were expressed about why they chose one option over the other, as well as their experiences completing their chosen assessment. Data were organized by the aforementioned research questions and their corresponding themes. I first showcase why participants chose a particular assessment format over the other (Research Question 1). I then focus on the participants' experiences with their assessment choice (Research Question 2). I provide direct quotes and discuss how these data are meaningful.

RQ1-Choosing the Assignment: Finding Direction

For the first theme, participants discussed their initial excitement as well as factors that might have made doing the project more challenging. This theme was explored while looking at question five on the survey, asking why they chose either the paper or the project. Of the fifteen responses, ten mentioned something that fit within this theme. Some words that helped generate this theme involved excitement, strengths, and time. Below are some representative quotes.

One participant discussed welcoming a challenge, saying, "I elected to do a project because I've never been given the option. I was excited to do something out of the norm to show my learning, but also tap into things I enjoy at the same time!" In a similar vein, another participant said, "I chose the project because it employs my strengths." A third participant chose the project, saying, "Creating a project is challenging and time-consuming, but it can be stimulating." Alternatively, a fourth participant who opted to write the paper discussed timing as a constraint.

"I would choose the traditional exam simply for the sake of time. Projects are so time-consuming, and when you are working a job and internship and taking a full course load, it is a challenge just to find the time to take on such a task."

Taken together, participants had a variety of reasons why they chose one type of exam over the other. Participants recognized that having the choice between a project and a paper lent itself to assessment autonomy. Some participants welcomed a challenge and wanted to try something novel. The strength-based aspect allows graduate students to express themselves for a potentially deeper appreciation of content. Others felt uneasiness because of the novelty, especially while balancing time on task. This is especially important for graduate students who are trying to balance school, work, families, social life, etc. If assessment autonomy is utilized with graduate students, we need to be mindful of how they are navigating these decisions.

RQ1-Choosing the Assignment: The Creative Process

With the second theme, participants discussed their willingness to engage in the open-endedness of a creative process. This theme was again explored while looking at question five on the survey, asking why they chose a certain final exam format. Of the fifteen responses, 9 mentioned something that fit within this theme. There was some overlap from the previous theme. Some words that helped generate this theme involved creativity, control, and application. Below are some representative quotes.

One participant discussed feeling in control. “I created a project because I’m very creative and I’m in control of the outcome.” A second participant who chose the project said, “I like that I was able to be creative in showing my knowledge of course content, and it was nice to not have to write a traditional paper (as I’ve already done many times this semester).” A third participant discussed not feeling creative enough to do the project-based final exam. “I chose the traditional exam because I am most comfortable with writing, and I am not particularly creative.” A final participant contrasted the project and paper.

“I chose to create a project because I felt like it was A) more fun for me, B) more applicable, and C) allowed me to be more creative. I felt like I could be more casual with the presentation of the material, but still provide thorough and accurate information. One of the things I do not like about traditional essays is the formality of the structure: introduction, thesis, topic sentences, transitions to the next argument, etc. I appreciate getting the choice, and I am happy with my end result.”

Creativity became another important factor while exploring assessment autonomy. It was found that participants might feel more in control if given a creative outlet. However, some still doubt their creative ability. Their comfort level became an important factor in choice. While thinking about graduate students, we should consider how frequently or infrequently graduate students are allowed to express their own creativity while they obtain highly specialized knowledge.

RQ2-Experiences: Freedom of Engagement

The third theme highlighted participants' freedom when given choices. Specifically, participants discussed this freedom when doing the project instead of the paper. This theme reflected the potential benefits of flexibility in assessment. Responses from this theme were found when exploring responses to questions 6-10 on the survey. Some words that helped generate this theme involved synthesis, flexibility, and future use. Below are some representative quotes.

One student wrote how the project allowed their individual strengths to shine through when given an option. "The project allows me to play to my own strengths, synthesizing the information in a coherent manner that demonstrates my understanding and my growth." Another participant appreciated a different assessment other than the ones typically used in graduate school. "Allowing for strengths to shine through was a reprieve from the many papers we have to write in grad school, creating something that we might actually use in the future." A third participant saw the value in a challenging endeavor. "This project is actually challenging and encouraging me to synthesize the information, which lets me know I've actually learned it and can apply it." A final participant highlighted the potential difference in experience if they chose to write the paper instead of doing the project.

"I would have enjoyed it far less because it would have just been writing a paper and not a paper on a chosen topic, but simply on the different concepts taught in class. I would have no flexibility in what to include because the requirements for the paper were extremely specific, and the project allowed for more flexibility."

The project allowed participants a place to demonstrate their mastery of content without feeling limited or constrained. Even further, participants highlighted how synthesizing information allowed for more application of course content. Participants discussed how people were able to apply information from the course, allowing for an opportunity for a deeper level of engagement. As we consider how we assess graduate students, assessment autonomy can encourage them to find greater application of content and more depth in knowledge.

RQ2-Experiences: Stress and Anxiety

Alternatively, some participants discussed the challenges that a project with more assessment autonomy might pose. Participants navigated or avoided the project because of their stress and anxiety. This theme reflected the potential drawbacks of assessment autonomy. Responses from this theme were found again when exploring responses to questions 6-10 on the survey. Some words that helped generate this theme involved anxiety, nervousness, and worry. Below are some representative quotes.

One participant wanted clearer instructions like those provided with the paper option. "Having too much freedom and flexibility can be daunting for some students who prefer to have clear instructions." Another participant chose the project but still felt anxious about their final grade. "The thing that makes me most anxious is what grade I will receive...with projects, I feel that the rubric is a little less objective." A third participant struggled to find an appropriate direction when completing the project.

“I think the thing that was the most challenging was trying to figure out how to take all of the required criteria and put it into a presentation that seemed fluid and did not feel like a bunch of random theories thrown together.”

A novel project can cause stress and anxiety. Much of the stress and anxiety was due to the potential subjectivity of the project compared to the paper. Other participants struggled with trying to make the project cohesive. Stress and anxiety provide some disconfirming evidence, showing the potential underside of assessment autonomy. As we consider how we assess graduate students, we should realize that choice, while potentially a positive endeavor, can make students feel overwhelmed.

Implications

Implications for this study allow us to better understand how students respond to assessment autonomy. This study further helped to better appreciate graduate student motivation and demotivation. This is especially important for how we assess graduate students, whereby graduate school further refines one's craft in a specific area.

This research supported Duncan and Buskirk-Cohen (2011) and Spinney & Kerr (2023) when they suggested that these types of assessments allow students to focus on their strengths and interests. This research also supported past research on student empowerment (Jopp & Cohen, 2022; Rideout, 2018; Spinney & Kerr, 2023; Wanner et al., 2024) and how these assessments can encourage higher-order skills and proactive learning behavior among them (Didicher, 2016; Pretorius et al., 2017).

This research also reinforced remarks made by Wanner and Palmer (2015) that even though students welcome the chance to have more choice and control over their assessments, they still desire guidelines and frameworks to work within. Further, this research shows us the importance of studying stress and anxiety in these types of assessments, as echoed by previous researchers (Coyne & Woodruff, 2022; Edwards, 2020; Hills & Peacock, 2022; Jopp & Cohen, 2022; Pretorius et al., 2017).

Connecting Assessment Autonomy to Self-Determination Theory

Assessment autonomy is connected to the other aspects of self-determination theory: competence and relatedness. Recall that competence is described as a feeling of being effective and of mastery (Beymer & Thompson, 2015; Deci & Ryan, 1985). The concept of relatedness refers to the need to feel connections with other individuals (Beymer & Thompson, 2015; Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The findings highlighted why participants selected one type of exam over another. Participants chose an assignment because of such things as their strengths, time allocation, and ability to be creative. This research then showed how perceived competence might overlap with autonomy when choosing a specific assessment. The findings also showcased the various experiences that the participants had, both from a freedom standpoint and a stress-inducing standpoint. Competence, then, is also interplaying with autonomy while students work on a specific assessment. If graduate students felt competent, they were more likely than not to choose an assignment that fostered more assessment

autonomy. Alternatively, if they felt less competent, they might have avoided the project-based final exam. Thus, perceived competence and actual competence give us a better understanding when educators decide to give choice and/or flexible assessments to foster more autonomy.

While discussing why participants chose a specific assessment and when describing their experiences, they still wanted to feel supported before and while working on their final exam. To feel a sense of relatedness, participants wanted a sense of trust that they would be graded fairly. The participants did suggest that encouragement allowed them to create a better project. Thus, relatedness can further the effectiveness of assessment autonomy, while also potentially strengthening one's competence. If we are giving students more assessment autonomy, we need to build rapport to diminish initial and ongoing stress and anxiety.

Both the paper and the project produced quality work where the students were able to demonstrate the application of content. However, the openness of the project-based final exam, by and large, produced aspects that the students were willing to share with their peers upon completion. For instance, in the additional comments section of the survey, a participant shared how they planned to share their created website with their colleagues to showcase the information they learned. That indication highlighted a major difference between the paper and the project. The project-based final exam inadvertently created a community of learners where the students took their knowledge beyond the course. Thus, the students refined their competence in the course material while also building their peers' understanding. They were also able to build social connections to foster relatedness. This study provided further evidence of how the three factors of self-determination theory, autonomy, competence, and relatedness, are intertwined.

Limitations

Despite the findings and implications, limitations exist in this research. I did not compare the reasons Master's and Doctoral students selected their final exam choice. This is a limitation because I did not consider factors such as busy schedules, having to do a project while starting a dissertation, etc. A second limitation involved me not asking more about how their specific programs assess and attempt to foster autonomy. For instance, there might be differences between education and nursing majors. A third limitation involved not getting more personal information from the participants. This could have strengthened the research to better understand things like how the students manage their anxiety.

Future Directions

Given those implications and limitations, there are directions researchers can take to further study assessment autonomy. One direction involves the continued study of graduate students' perceptions of assessment autonomy. Within that, the different degree hierarchies could be studied to see what factors play into the benefits and drawbacks of assessment autonomy. It might also be worth studying if the programs in graduate school make a difference. A third direction could be focusing on how different professors utilize assessment autonomy and if certain factors create opportunities or hindrances based on how faculty foster competence and relatedness. A fourth direction worth expanding could involve diverging from graduate students to focus on P-12 and undergraduate

students to better understand how development impacts assessment autonomy. A final direction worth exploring is comparing a teacher and student perspective for those who have a dual identity as a classroom teacher and a graduate student.

Conclusions

This article asked graduate students about their perceptions of assessment autonomy while completing a project or paper-based final exam. The participants documented the reasons they chose one format or the other, while also expanding on their experiences. While exploring the various themes, assessment autonomy was found to be a motivator for many, but still acted as a potential demotivator for others. The success of assessment autonomy is also mitigated by a person's competence and relatedness, furthering the importance of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000, 2012) as an impactful motivational theory. Thus, assessment autonomy is something that should be studied to further explore student motivation. As one participant said, "Choice is a major part of motivation. If students feel like they have some control over what they are doing, they are more likely to produce quality work."

There are obvious benefits to using assessment autonomy, such as the students being able to showcase their strengths and synthesize information for deeper understanding. As educators, we also need to be aware of how assessment autonomy could invite more stress and anxiety. Graduate school can be a place to advance a person's knowledge, increase their financial earnings, and influence their career trajectory. It is important to find ways to make the graduate school experience impactful for our students.

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Appendix A: Paper

Having gone through this course, you have learned much about the concepts of learning. We discussed learning from three perspectives: behaviorism (classical and operant conditioning), cognitivism (information processing, the brain, Piaget/Vygotsky), and social learning (social cognitivism and social constructivism). However, none of these can be thought of in isolation. They all constantly inform one another, despite having different histories and approaches. For example, vicarious reinforcement has tenets in behaviorism, cognitivism, and social learning.

For this exam, I want you to discuss how learning appreciates the perspectives of all three together within your field/area of interest. This will be done in two parts as discussed below. Please label each part.

Part One:

As a practitioner, you must stay up to date with current happenings in your field. Provide a concrete example of how your own learning is demonstrated through behavioral, cognitive, and social change together. It might help to think about things that encourage your own learning, such as grad school, professional experiences, etc. This can be done in 4 paragraphs. The first paragraph can describe the example. The second paragraph can describe how learning occurs in your example from a behavioral perspective. The third paragraph can describe how learning occurs in your example from a cognitive perspective. The fourth paragraph can describe how learning occurs in your example from a social perspective.

Part Two:

Next, document a concrete example of how learning occurs with those with whom you work (colleagues with different jobs, students, patients, etc.). Be sure to discuss how learning is demonstrated through behavioral, cognitive, and social change together. This can again be done in 4 paragraphs. The first paragraph can describe the example. The second paragraph can describe how learning occurs in your example from a behavioral perspective. The third paragraph can describe how learning occurs in your example from a cognitive perspective. The fourth paragraph can describe how learning occurs in your example from a social perspective.

Assessment Criteria

- Each part should address the four required paragraphs with accuracy.
- Each part should be at least one page in length with depth and clarity (at least two total pages for the assignment).
- You need at least five citations from course material in each Part (ten total).
 - Use APA formatting.
 - You may use the same citation in Part One and Part Two.
 - If you cite the book or PPT, be sure to include the chapter or title of the slideshow.
- Correct grammar, spelling, and mechanics.

Grading Rubric

	0	1	2	3	4	Total	Feedback
Part 1	No paragraphs addressed in Part 1 are accurate, or Part 1 is not attempted.	Only 1 of the 4 paragraphs is addressed in Part 1 with accuracy.	Only 2 of the 4 paragraphs are addressed in Part 1 with accuracy.	Only 3 of the 4 paragraphs are addressed in Part 1 with accuracy.	ALL four paragraphs are addressed in Part 1 with accuracy.		
Part 2	No paragraphs addressed in Part 2 are accurate, or Part 2 is not attempted.	Only 1 of the 4 paragraphs is addressed in Part 2 with accuracy.	Only 2 of the 4 paragraphs are addressed in Part 2 with accuracy.	Only 3 of the 4 paragraphs are addressed in Part 2 with accuracy.	ALL four paragraphs are addressed in Part 2 with accuracy.		
Pages	No paragraphs are included for Parts 1 and 2.	Parts 1 and 2 are not at least a page, nor has depth and clarity.	Neither Parts 1 nor 2 are at least one page, but have some depth and clarity.	Only 1 of the 2 parts is at least one page with depth and clarity.	Parts 1 and 2 are both at least one page with depth and clarity.		
Citations	No citations to the course material provided.	Only 1-3 citations from the course material.	Only 4-6 citations from the course material.	Only 7-9 citations from the course material.	10 Total citations from the course material, with both Parts having 5 citations.		
Spelling, Grammar, and Mechanics	>15 errors in spelling, grammar, or mechanics.	11-14 errors in spelling, grammar, or mechanics.	7-10 errors in spelling, grammar, or mechanics.	4-6 errors in spelling, grammar, or mechanics.	0-3 errors in spelling, grammar, or mechanics.		
X 5							
Grand Total:							/100
Additional Feedback:							

Appendix B: Project

Overview: For your final exam, you are going to utilize the knowledge and skills you have learned over the course of the semester to demonstrate your knowledge of assessment. As we think about culturally responsive teaching and assessment, we must appreciate our students' abilities inside and outside of our classrooms. For the final exam, I am asking you to demonstrate what you learned from this course in a way that employs your strengths. For instance, if you have an amazing ability to draw, you can paint a picture or create a graphic novel. You are tasked to create a unique product.

- **YOU ARE CREATING A PRODUCT THAT EXPLICITLY TIES IN COURSE CONTENT.**
- **I SHOULD BE ABLE TO LOOK AT YOUR PRODUCT AND KNOW EXACTLY WHAT MODULE YOU PULLED FROM.**
- **MEANING I DO NOT WANT SOMETHING IN THE ABSTRACT.**

THINGS NOT ACCEPTED INCLUDE: written essays strictly regurgitating information, short answer responses, PowerPoints/Prezis (or any similar format).

POTENTIAL IDEAS INCLUDE, BUT NOT LIMITED TO: graphic novel, artwork, restaurant menu, newspaper article, poem, song, graphic organizer, book/short story, choreographed dance, film, speech, monologue, play, video, interview, talk show, commercial/infomercial, movie trailer, event plan, portfolio, website, blog post, construction project, etc.

**If you create something like a poem or song, I encourage you to film or record yourself performing it, so I know how you want these things interpreted. You can incorporate students, but I will need to see a signed permission slip for each student.*

YOU WILL BE EVALUATED ON THESE THREE CATEGORIES:

- In your product, you must demonstrate/portray aspects from at least 6 of the modules from the course. 60 percent of the total (10 percent for each module)
 - Each module utilized must be evident from an outsider's perspective, not familiar with the course content.
 - Each module utilized must incorporate some aspect of the course material as demonstrated from the readings, videos, PowerPoints, discussions, etc.
 - Each module utilized must demonstrate accurate information.
 - Each module utilized must attempt to make the material applicable.
 - Each of the 6 modules must be synthesized, showing how all the material from this course blends together in your product. 10 percent of the total.
 - The product should be designed in a way that is organized but also allows for a creative outlet.
-

- III. For each of the modules portrayed, you must write 3-5 sentences justifying the use of the material (minimum of 18 sentences). **30 percent of the total (5 percent for each module)**
- a) Why you chose a selected module
 - b) How the material from a selected module explicitly fits within your product
 - c) How you see the material from that selected module fit within the greater landscape of learning.

Grading Rubric			
Categories	Scoring	Grade	Feedback
6 Modules Utilized	<u>For each Module, you will be assessed by:</u> 0.25 = module is evident 0.25 = course material is demonstrated to an objective audience 0.25 = accurate information 0.25 = applicable material <u>1 Module = 1 point; 6 Modules = 6 points</u> <u>Scoring Range = 0 to 6</u>	/6	
Modules are Synthesized in the Product	0 = Product is not synthesized 0.5 = Product contains some synthesized aspects, but still is an incomplete whole 1 = All modules are synthesized together	/1	
6 Module Justifications	<u>For each Module, you will be assessed by:</u> 0 = No sentences written / sentences don't address the prompt 0.25 = Only some sentences written for the module / not all sentences address the prompt 0.5 = Prompt is fully addressed for the module <u>1 Module = 0.5 point; 6 Modules = 3 points</u> <u>Scoring Range = 0 to 3</u>	/3	
Additional Feedback:			
Total =		x 10	
Grade Percentage =		/100	

Appendix C: Survey

1. Please rank the order in which assessments are most assigned to you in graduate school. Put a 1 next to the assessment type that is most assigned. Put a 2 next to the assessment type that is the 2nd most assigned. Etc.

You do not need to add a rank order if an assignment type has not been assigned to you.

- ___ Selected Response Exams (Multiple choice, true/false, etc.)
- ___ Papers
- ___ Discussions
- ___ Portfolios
- ___ Presentations
- ___ Group Projects
- ___ Individual Projects
- ___ Other _____

2. Please rank the order in which assessments are most assigned to you as an undergraduate. Put a 1 next to the assessment type that is most assigned. Put a 2 next to the assessment type that is the 2nd most assigned. Etc.

You do not need to add a rank order if an assignment type has not been assigned to you.

- ___ Selected Response Exams (Multiple choice, true/false, etc.)
- ___ Papers
- ___ Discussions
- ___ Portfolios
- ___ Presentations
- ___ Group Projects
- ___ Individual Projects
- ___ Other _____

3. As a student, what types of assessments (selected response exams, papers, discussions, etc.) do you enjoy the most? Why?
4. As a student, what types of assessments (selected response exams, papers, discussions, etc.) do you enjoy the least? Why?
5. You were given the choice between a more traditional exam and one where you created a project. Which option did you choose and why?
6. Describe your experiences when completing the final exam (things that made you excited, things that made you anxious, things that were challenging, etc.).
7. If you had chosen instead to complete the other format for the final exam, how do you think your experience would have been similar?

8. If you had chosen instead to complete the other format for the final exam, how do you think your experience would have been dissimilar?
9. Please describe the benefits (if any) of allowing students to choose their own idea for a project.
10. Please describe the drawbacks (if any) in allowing students to choose their own idea for a project.
11. Are you a classroom teacher?
 - a. If so, what grade and subject do you teach?
12. As a classroom teacher, what assignments do you typically assign to your students? Do your students typically enjoy those assignments? Why or why not?
13. When teaching, do you allow students to choose how they are assessed with a variety of assignments/project ideas? If yes, can you describe the process (i.e., number of choices you typically give, types of projects assigned, how you grade different projects, etc.)?
14. Any further comments you wish to share?

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