

Utilizing labor-based grading contracts in psychology classes as anti-bias anti-racist (ABAR) educational assessments

Sally Tang, BA ¹, J. Garrett-Walker, PhD^{1,2}
Matthew R. Capriotti, PhD,³ Benjamin Levy, PhD¹ &
Joyce P. Yang, PhD¹



¹Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco
²Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development,
University of Toronto
³Department of Psychology, San Jose State University

METHODS

- $N = 50$ students enrolled in five upper-division psychology courses that implemented the grading contract during the 2021 spring semester (response rate: 43.1%)
- After courses concluded, students were invited to complete a voluntary program evaluation survey
- Nonparametric Mann-Whitney U tests of differences were conducted to compare URM and White students’ responses

Grading Contract Example:

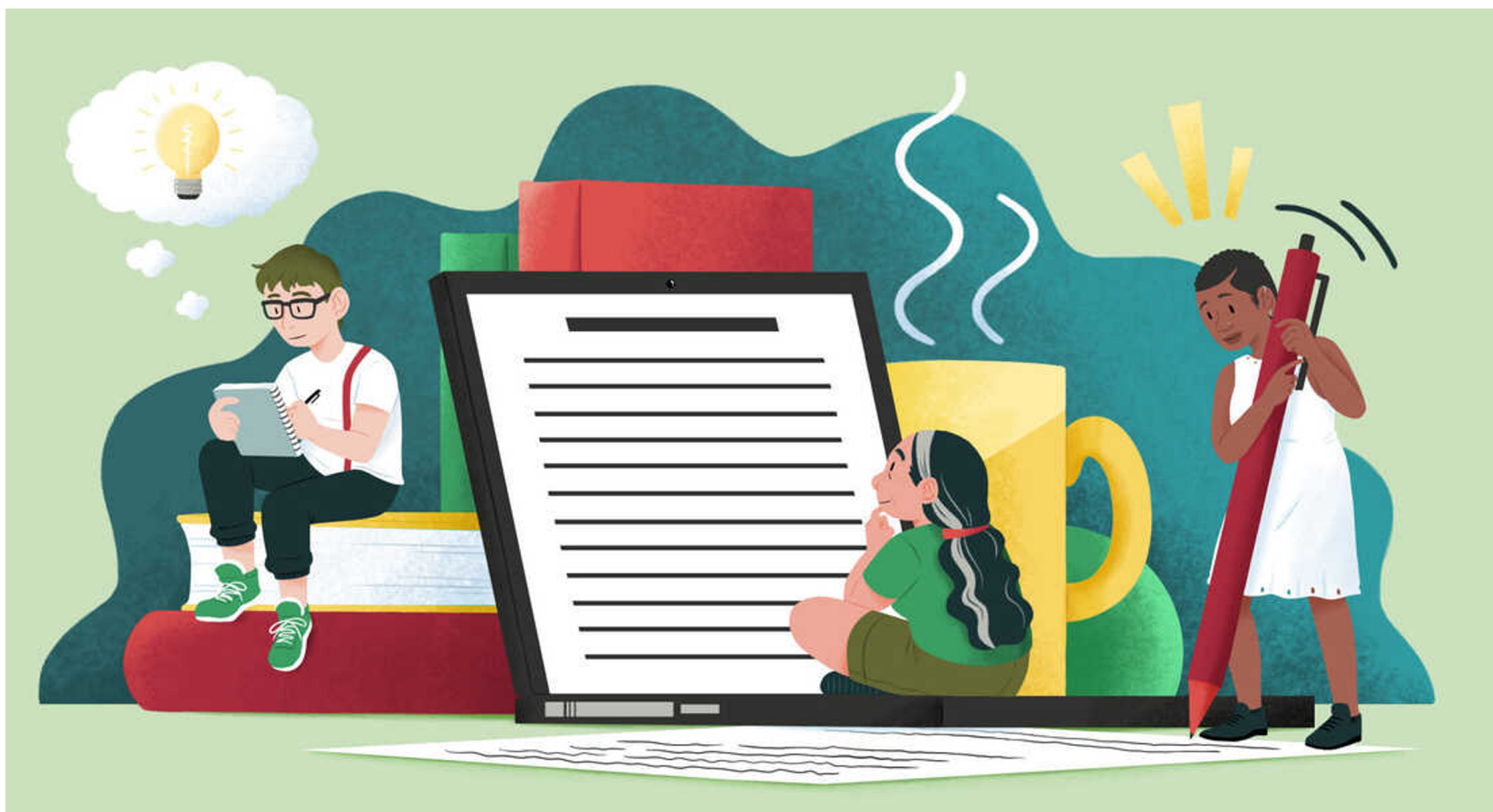
- “You will earn a B- in this class for meeting basic course expectations. Your grade will increase if you go above and beyond these expectations, and your grade will decrease if you do not meet these expectations”
- “Turn in at least 10 out of 12 complete weekly reaction posts.”
- “Turn in a complete report paper by the due date. ”
- “For each required assignment you do not successfully complete (meaning it is late or incomplete or unsubmitted), your grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., 1 missed assignment = C+; 2 missed assignments = C)”

INTRODUCTION

- Traditional grading systems focus on evaluating student outcomes with less emphasis on the quantity of labor required by each student to achieve the desired academic product (Inoue, 2019)
- Traditional assessments focus on comparing students against each other and to an “established standard”, which typically reflects the status quo of institutional racism and exclusion (Inoue, 2019)
 - This type of assessment may be detrimental to learning and particularly harmful for underrepresented minority (URM) students (e.g., Black, Latinx, Native American, and Pacific Islander undergraduates) and raciolinguistically diverse students (Inoue, 2019)
- Scholars have proposed alternative labor-based grading contracts which justify grades based on the amount of work done by the student, as anti-bias anti-racist (ABAR) pedagogical tools to improve educational equity among diverse students and help undergraduates focus on achieving learning outcomes instead of grades. (Inoue, 2012; Inoue, 2019)
 - There is limited research on URM students’ experiences of grading contracts, and none in psychology

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- Majority of students found grading contracts to be acceptable, feasible, and appropriate
- Compared to White students, URM students were more likely to report that: (URM vs. White)
 - the grading contract contributed to learning ($U = 59, p < .10$)
 - URM ($M = 4.00$)
 - White ($M = 3.33$)
 - the grading contract was fair ($U = 41.5, p < .05$)
 - URM ($M = 4.24$)
 - White ($M = 3.56$)



QUALITATIVE DATA

- Any modifications to the Grading Contract?
 - “not as much opportunity to raise my grade as I would have liked”
 - “Add some optional deadlines in for the grade boosters so the work is more spread out”
 - Want more feedback on “how well I did on each assignment”
 - “It’s important to be clear about what the criteria is for the grading contract.”
- Experience with Grading Contract (GC)?
 - “I ... feel more motivated to actually learn and understand the material, rather than having to focus on memorizing the information”
 - “Every student could choose what would best suit them”
 - “I...feel less overwhelmed and stressed”
 - “The GC made me feel supported by my professor and the university”
 - “The GC allows students to really focus on what they want to get out of the class and essentially choose the grade they want”

Demographic Factor	%
Age (n = 40)	$M = 22$
University Year (n = 48)	
First Year	2.1
Second Year	12.5
Third Year	39.6
Fourth Year	37.5
Other	8.3
Gender (n = 48)	
Non-binary	4.2
Woman	87.5
Man	8.3
Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3.3
Asian	24.6
Black	14.8
Hispanic/Latinx	27.9
White	29.5
First Generation Student (n = 49)	
No	61.2
Yes	38.8
International Student (n = 49)	
No	91.8
Yes	8.2
Paid Job (n = 49)	
No	34.7
Yes, one job	34.7
Yes, more than one job	30.6
Non-paid occupation (n = 49)	
No	48.9
Yes	51.0
Family Caregiving (n = 49)	
No	69.4
Yes	30.6

URM students: Black, Hispanic/Latinx, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

