

THE PROBLEM IS NOT LEARNING: FACILITATED ACQUISITION OF STIMULUS EQUIVALENCE CLASSES AMONG LOW-ACHIEVING COLLEGE STUDENTS

Amanda C. Adcock
University of North Texas

Rhonda M. Merwin
Duke University Medical Center

Kelly G. Wilson, Chad E. Drake, and Christina I. Tucker
University of Mississippi

Camden Elliott
Duke University Medical Center

The present study examines whether facilitated acquisition occurs in contexts when 1 stimulus in a class is emotionally evocative and the other stimuli are arbitrary or neutral. Undergraduates with high and low grade-point averages (GPA) completed a matching-to-sample task that resulted in the formation of 3 stimulus equivalence classes. Each class contained 2 arbitrary stimuli and 1 nonarbitrary stimulus. The nonarbitrary stimulus was either emotionally evocative (academic failure words) or emotionally neutral. Results indicated facilitated acquisition of the academic failure class among low-GPA college students. Findings suggest that stimuli that were once neutral may become associated with emotionally evocative stimuli given the appropriate context, and that this may occur more readily when the emotionally evocative stimulus is personally relevant.

Key words: stimulus equivalence, facilitated acquisition, derived relational responding, learning, academic performance