

# Strategies and Tactics for Training Graduate Students to Become Competent Teachers

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I received my PhD in social psychology from Saint Louis University in 2003 and am in the midst of my second semester as assistant professor of psychology at Georgia Southern University. In graduate school I received outstanding research training and extensive experience teaching. I think I love research and teaching equally, and I am fortunate to be a member of a psychology department that values and rewards both endeavors. Graduate students often receive the message that they must choose between being a great researcher or a great teacher. As a member of both the American Psychological Society and the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, I strive to be both. Through the integration of research and teaching, excellence in one promotes excellence in the other.

Within social psychology, my basic research interest is the social-cognitive aspects of stereotypes and prejudice. My applied research interest is jury decision-making. My master's thesis advisor was APS Charter Member Richard Wiener, who is now director of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's law/psychology program. This early exposure to the intersection of psychology and law led to my interest in the effects of stereotypes and prejudice in jury decision-making. My dissertation, which was chaired by Donna LaVoie, a cognitive psychologist, examined a juror's ability to disregard inadmissible testimony that was stereotypical of the defendant; a follow-up study currently underway is investigating what cognitive and motivational factors underlie one's ability to disregard stereotypical inadmissible testimony. There are many ways, unfortunately, in which stereotypes and prejudice influence the legal system. A related research interest of mine is the role of gender stereotypes and prejudice in sexual harassment and rape cases.

While I love conducting research, I would not feel complete without teaching. My love for teaching is inspired by APS Fellow Jim Korn, who was (and continues to be) my teaching mentor at Saint Louis University. Jim taught a teaching of psychology course at SLU and encouraged his students to think deeply about their teaching. This semester I am teaching a psychology and law course that includes undergraduate and graduate students, an undergraduate research methods course, and a graduate research design course. All of these courses allow me to integrate my love of teaching and research. The undergraduate research methods students carry out a survey or experimental research project from start to finish; the graduate research design students write a mini grant proposal; and the psychology and law students develop a research question based on their review of laws and the legal system and psychological theory.

It is especially exciting to watch a student become interested in research as a result of something we discussed in class. For example, after a discussion of how the media portrays criminals and victims of crime and how this relates to public perception of crime, a student approached me with a research idea to experimentally test the role of the media in perceptions of crime and stereotypes of criminals.

This semester I am also chairing a master's thesis and am a committee member for two other theses.

This is another excellent opportunity to integrate teaching and research.

The graduate student I am advising, Masami Ota, is interested in studying the intergroup stereotypes of American and Japanese students. As Masami's thesis advisor, I am not only sharing with her my knowledge of stereotypes, prejudice, and research methods, but learning from her the similarities and differences in American and Asian cultures. I can already picture integrating this knowledge into the social psychology class I will teach next fall.