



Students collaborate on a design thinking activity during the study.

Examining the INTERSECTION of HUMOR and CREATIVITY

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NO, NOT REALLY



YES, DEFINITELY!

groups overall did see an increase in the way they viewed their own creativity. While the majority of both the control and improv groups KDOCs scores increased, the improv group experienced more growth, 113% of the increase that the control group experienced. This shows that creativity can be taught and that participating in improv games was beneficial to the growth experience.

This study also shows that improv games were beneficial to a participants ability to apply their new creative framework. In an interesting twist which proved to be a substantial limitation to the study, the improv group was naturally less creative than the control group at the outset of the study. This was evidenced by the first alternative uses test in which participants were tasked with coming up with as many uses as they could for a paper clip. The improv group was able to come up with an average of 9.66 ideas per person compared to the 10.59 ideas per person of the control group. At the conclusion of the study, the results were the opposite. The improv group averaged 11.62 ideas per person, an increase of 20.31%. The control group averaged 11.49 ideas per person, an increase of 8.53%. These results indicate that the improv group experienced more than twice the growth as the control group. These were individual metrics based on each participant's own view of their creativity and their ability to apply the skills they learned to the alternative uses tests. *When quantity of ideas is the goal, the value of improv to foster a creative environment is an important revelation.*

Another interesting finding was that the most challenging activity undertaken during the study was also the activity that the largest number of the study participants identified as their favorite, with 43% of the improv group indicating it as their favorite, compared with 33% of the control group. This could imply that the improv games fostered a sense of grit and persistence in the improv group. This is an area for future study.

Although this study did result in some significant findings about the effects of improv on creative confidence and applied creativethinking skills, it is important to address the limitations of the study. One of the most significant limitations of the study was that although randomly selected, the control group was more creative at the beginning of the study than the improv group. This made comparing the results of the collaborative activities between the improv and control groups problematic as the data does not take into account the inherent difference in skill and predisposition between these two groups. Additional limitations effected the results including preexisting group dynamics and environmental constraints such as room size and seating configuration. These findings suggest further research on the effect of improv games on collaboration in groups, both newly formed and preexisting, is needed.

and Heightening. During the game, the participants helped to create a story about a dog who went to college. Each participant added to the story using the structure of Yes (previous idea) and (new idea) generating as many ideas as possible. During the Identify the Unusual Thing phase, the facilitator lead the participants in a discussion to find the idea they thought was the most unusual, or the most surprising. Participants further developed the "Unusual Thing" by following the protocol of "If the unusual thing is true, then (this is also true)."

Findings

We found that participating in improv games as part of a creative-thinking curriculum did increase individual participants creative self-concept and ability to generate ideas. The findings of this study also reinforce the effectiveness of the design improv method proposed by Hatcher et al. (2018) and further extend the validity of the method by testing it in an experimental environment.

Over the course of the study, the majority of participants (75.5%) saw an increase in their creative confidence as measured by an increase in their before and after KDOCs scores. This shows an increase in their creative self-concept, the way they see themselves as a creative or not creative person. A larger percentage of the improv group (77.4%) experienced an increase than the control group (73.1%) although both

Introduction

IT'S no secret that comedic improvisation takes a quick mind, active listening skills, and a willingness to explore the unexpected. The same skills are at the heart of ideation and innovation. Creatively confident individuals are willing to take risks, fail, and work at the edges of their comfort zone in order to find creative solutions to problems. Creative confidence builds on the social cognitive theory of psychology which states that social interactions are an important part of how people learn new skills. One core tenet of this theory is guided mastery, a process by which one is moved from phobia to a state of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a belief that one is capable of completing a task and affecting change.

Facilitation is essential to design thinking, with stakeholders being selected and activities planned by a trained facilitator. One of the core tenets of facilitation is the power of experiential learning (Berta et al., 2015). This same tenet is at the core of the self-efficacy theory and guided mastery therapies.

Both innovation and humor rely on an ability to make unusual connections and see things in a different light. Incongruity theory of humor provides an approach for better understanding the commonalities between humor and innovation. In design-thinking

sessions, stakeholders come from a variety of backgrounds and social standings. This creates an environment that can be filled with fear of the unknown and a general discomfort with freedom that creative problem solving requires. We propose that humor is the key to creating a level and open playing field where the voices of all stakeholders can be heard.

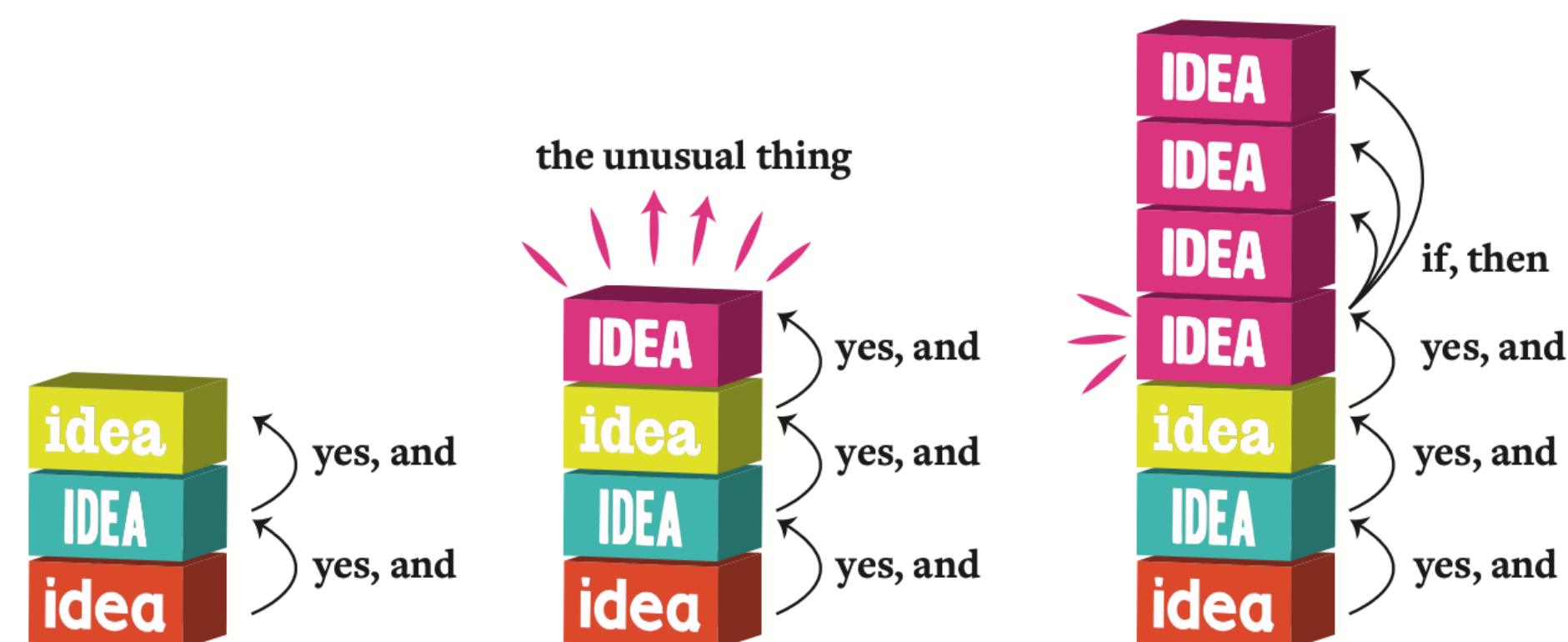
Methodology

An experimental design solution was implemented to answer the question "*Can a set of guided improv exercises increase the quantity of ideas generated during a group ideation session?*" A sample of 94 community college students participated in three brainstorming activities of increasing difficulty as part of a three session creative-thinking module. The control group received standard instruction for each activity. The improv group

received the same instruction with the addition of one comedic improv inspired activity during two of the sessions. Results were measuring through pre and post study questionnaires including the Kaufmann Domains of Creativity Scale (KDOCs) and alternative uses tests in which participants listed as many possible uses for a common household object as they could.

The first of the improv activities, The Nickname Game, is used at IDEO to reduce hierarchy and limit self-censoring (Kelley & Kelley, 2013). Nametags, preprinted with nicknames, were distributed to the participants who then introduced themselves by telling a story about how they got their nickname. They were encouraged to be as outlandish as possible.

The second improv game consisted of three parts: *Yes, And, Identify the Unusual Thing,*



The Yes, And, Identify, Heighten Activity modified from Hatcher et al. 2019

RESULTS TO CROW ABOUT:

- Creative thinking can be taught.** Both improv & control groups saw increases in alternative use test scores, KDOCs score.
- If you think you are creative, you're right.** Significant correlation exists between self-assessment of creativity & alternative use test scores, KDOCs score.
- Improv "greases the wheels" for ideation.** Improv group alternative use test scores increased 138% more than the control group.

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