**Open Your Class With This Tomorrow**

***The Drunkard's Walk: How Randomness Rules our Lives***

**Schema Theory**

This is a demonstration based on the work done by Anderson and Prichert regarding how schemas can be constructed and how our expectations can distort or alter the encoding and recall of information in memory.

**Directions:** Provide one of the two sets of directions found on page three of this document randomly to each student. Do not make it obvious that you are distributing different instructions to the students. Ask the students to silently read the directions and call you over if they need clarification. Next, read the story below, once the reading has begun, students may not ask any questions or make any comments about the story. Indicate that students should not write anything down as you are reading the story.

**Story**

The two boys ran until they came to the driveway. "See, I told you today was good for skipping school," said Mark. "Mom is never home on Thursday," he added. Tall hedges hid the house from the road, so the pair strolled across the finely landscaped yard. "I never knew your place was so big," said Pete. "Yeah, but it's nicer now than it used to be since Dad had the new stone siding put on and added the fireplace.”

There were front and back doors and a side door which led to the garage which was empty except for three parked 10-speed bikes. They went in the side door, Mark explaining that it was always open in case his younger sisters got home earlier than their mother.

Pete wanted to see the house, so Mark started with the living room. It, like the rest of the downstairs, was newly painted. Mark turned on the stereo, the noise of which worried Pete. "Don't worry, the nearest house is a quarter of a mile away," Mark shouted. Pete felt more comfortable observing that no houses could be seen in any direction beyond the huge yard.

The dining room, with all the china, silver and cut glass, was no place to play, so the boys moved into the kitchen where they made sandwiches. Mark said they wouldn't go to the basement because it had been damp and musty ever since the new plumbing had been installed.

"This is where my Dad keeps his famous paintings and his coin collection,” Mark said as they peered into the den. Mark bragged that he could get spending money whenever he needed it since he'd discovered that his dad kept a lot in the desk drawer.

There were three bedrooms upstairs. Mark showed Pete his mother's closet, which was filled with furs and the locked box which held her jewels. His sisters` room was uninteresting except for the color TV which Mark carried to his room. Mark bragged that the bathroom in the hall was his since one had been added to his sisters' room for their use. The big highlight in his room, though, was a leak in the ceiling where the old roof had finally rotted.

Adapted from: Anderson and Pritchard, 1978

**Discussion:** After you have completed reading the story, ask students the following questions.

1. What was the name of your kindergarten teacher?
2. If they could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?
3. What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?

This distraction task should eliminate any recency effects.

Ask the students to write down as much about the story as possible; this can be items or take a more narrative form. Give students about 3-4 minutes to recall as much as they can about the house tour.

Now ask a student with each different set of directions to read them out loud so that the whole group will be aware of each set of directions.

Go through the list below and ask students to keep track of how many items they had correct from each condition. Those in the burglar condition will likely have more correct in that category while those in the homebuyer condition will likely have more correct in that category. Some events from the story are neutral and may be recalled by either group equally.

Discuss how schema theory relates to the different results that will likely come up between the two groups.

The following list represents those items from the story which are more likely to be recalled by the burglar condition and those that are more likely to be called by the homebuyer condition. This should allow you to take a quick poll of your class to see if they remembered more items which were consistent with the schema they were provided at the start of the study.

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| **Burglar condition specific details** |  | **Homebuyer condition specific details** |
| Mom is never home on Thursday |  | I never knew your place was so big |
| three bikes |  | stone siding |
| garage door always open |  | fireplace |
| stereo |  | front back and side doors |
| china, silver, cut glass |  | newly painted |
| famous paintings |  | no houses could be seen in any direction |
| coin collection |  | huge yard |
| spending money in desk drawer |  | damp and musty/new plumbing |
| furs |  | three upstairs bedrooms |
| jewels |  | two bathrooms/newly added bathroom |
| color TV |  | leak in the ceiling, old roof had rotted |

**DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENTS**

**Directions:** You are a burglar and are interested in robbing this house. The house is currently vacant, and you have called a realtor to walk you through the house to determine if it is a worthwhile job. Be sure to take note of items that might be easily transportable or that might be highly valuable. Also, look for areas in the house where valuables might be stored.

**Directions:** You are a prospective home buyer and have just received word from a friend that her neighbor has just moved and is looking to sell her house. You call the realtor to arrange a viewing. Be sure as you walk through the house that your family of 6 including your spouse, and four children ages 7-18 (three boys and a girl) will have the space they need to live comfortably in the home.