Participant Idea Exchange (PIE) Proposal

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Title: “Psychology Best Sellers: How to Sell Students on Writing in Psychology”

The [American Psychological Association’s (APA’s) Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Majo](http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/about/psymajor-guidelines.pdf)r identify effective writing as an important learning goal.

“Students completing foundation-level courses should be able to write a cogent scientific argument, present information using a scientific approach, engage in discussion of psychological concepts, explain the ideas of others, and express their own ideas with clarity” (APA Guidelines, 2013, p. 30).

The APA also lists writing as an important career skill (<http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psn/2016/09/skills-employers-value.aspx>). In this session, participants will exchange ideas about using Psychology Best Sellers to motivate student writing in foundational psychology courses.

One discussion topic will address a simple question: What makes a Psychology Best Seller? We will consider how first-year college students might approach that question when reading and writing about four Psychology Best Sellers.

1. *The Soul of an Octopus* (Sy Montgomery)
2. *The Genius of Dogs* (Vanessa Woods & Brian Hare, recent NITOP keynote speaker)
3. *The Moral Landscape* (Sam Harris)
4. *Enlightenment Now* (Steven Pinker, recent NITOP keynote speaker)

Another discussion topic will address books that students might use to guide their writing and refine their awareness of how Psychology Best-Selling authors write.

1. *They Say, I Say* (Cathy Birkenstein & Gerald Graff)
2. *How to Not Write Bad* (Ben Yagoda)
3. *It was the Best of Sentences, it was the Worst of Sentences* (June Cassagrande)
4. *The Sense of Style* (Steven Pinker, recent NITOP Keynote Speaker)

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Discussion Questions

1. Describe the experiences you’ve had or challenges you might anticipate with using Psychology Best Sellers in foundational psychology courses. Which best-sellers have worked or failed, and in what ways?

2. What are the pros and cons associated with using Psychology Best Sellers instead of a more traditional introductory psychology textbook? Does your answer depend on the role your course plays in your department’s Psychology curriculum, and/or your institutions General Education curriculum?

3. Describe the experiences you’ve had or challenges you might anticipate with writing instruction books, or other writing instruction resources. Which have worked or failed, and in what ways?