**Producing Readable Writers**

**NITOP 2022 – Participant Idea Exchange**

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Research ethics in psychology flow from the Belmont Report. The Belmont Report emphasizes principles of justice, and respect for persons. Justice requires fairly distributing costs and benefits to potential research participants. Respect for persons entails informed consent. Accordingly, Institutional Review Boards often ensure that informed consent forms not exceed 8th grade readability. In short, readability promotes social justice.

While most students value social justice, few connect it with the readability of their own writing. Indeed, students often try to make their writing seem complex with big words and long sentences. Yet big words and long sentences impair readability. This session will address how faculty can use readability measures to help students write more inclusively. Readability measures also connect well with varied psychology topics. Examples include social justice, cognition, metacognition, and operational definitions.

The session will feature active learning resources. For example, we will explore an online experiment that tests students' sensitivity to sentence length -a common readability factor. We will also work with spreadsheets containing readability statistics on the 2020 NITOP poster abstracts. NITOP poster abstracts provide the further benefit of having students see the range of teaching issues that faculty consider. Lastly, we will develop new student discussion questions and activities about readability. Examples include comparing and contrasting readability indices and using those indices for observational / archival research.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Most readability measures use just two variables: sentence length and word length. What are some pros and cons associated with this choice of variables?

2. Writing is a process, not just a product. At what point(s) in the writing process should writers use readability measures?

3. Describe the experiences you’ve had or challenges you might anticipate in improving the readability of students’ writing.