

Breaking Good: Bringing Positive Psychology to the Land of Enchantment

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Albuquerque, New Mexico has gotten a bad rap for some because of a certain fictional world... that took someone down a very un-positive psychology path...



We want to tell you about what some of us at the University of New Mexico have done to enable people in the real world to move in a different direction.

What have we done to use positive psychology to open up a better path?

The main ingredients:

Courses

Positive Psychology Lecture

Positive Psychology Lab

Positive Psychology Teaching Practicum

Activities and Groups

Positive Psychology at the Movies

Happiness and Positive Psychology Initiative

Happiness Alliance of New Mexico



Think about what you have done and let's share ideas.

Positive Psychology Lecture

This began in 2005 and grew from 30 undergraduates every other year to 200 every semester.

It grew to include a graduate student component as a part of the same class.

It grew from having no teaching assistants to two graduate and six undergraduate TAs.



It was voted best course at the university last year.

How is the course structured?

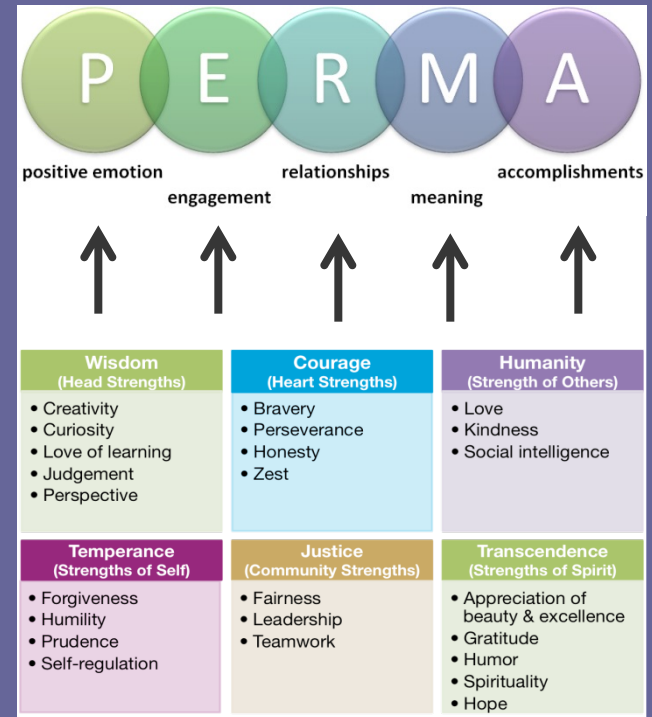
What is happiness and well-being?

What have we learned about how to achieve them?

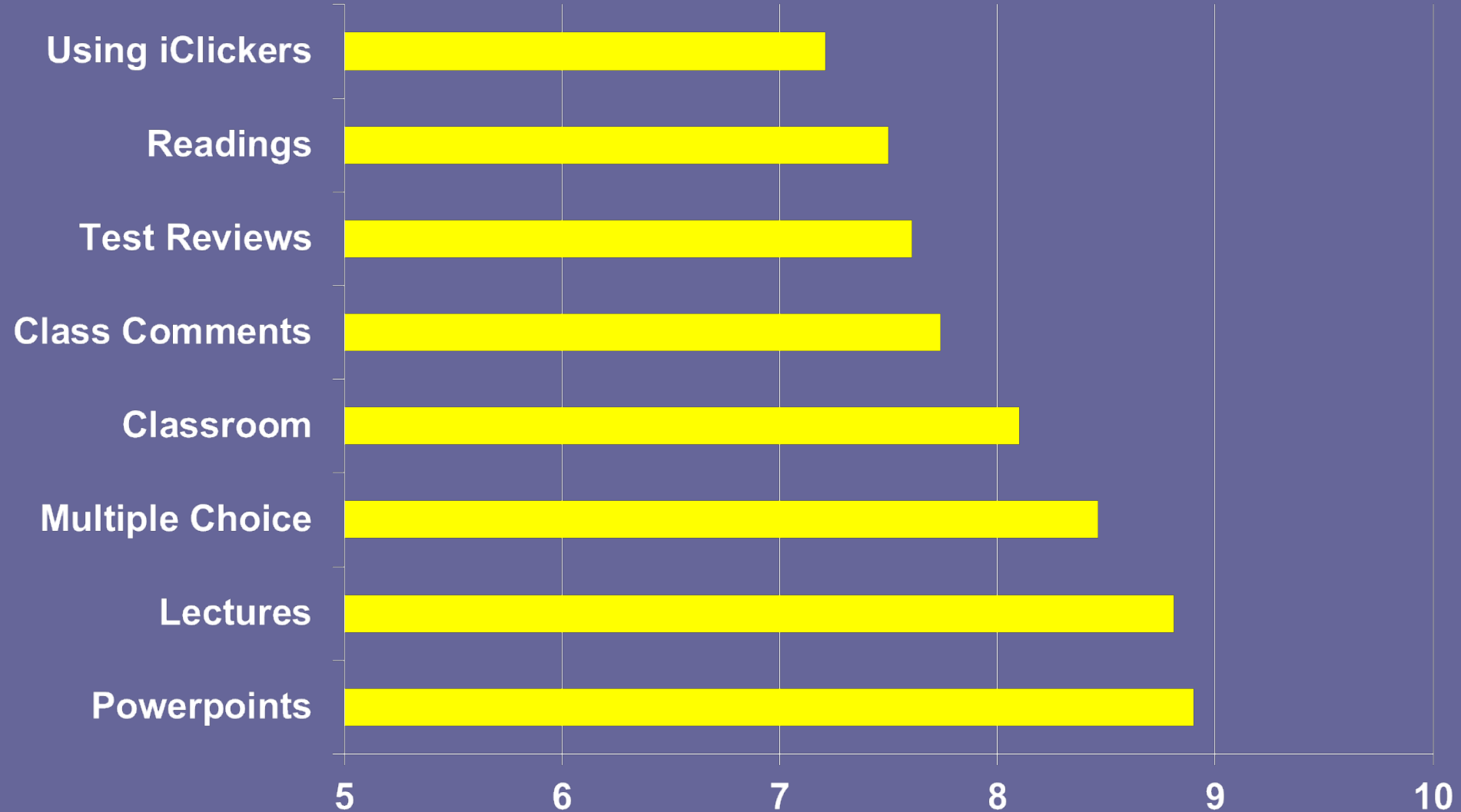
The classes are organized in relation to the VIA human strengths and other positive qualities.

Video clips are used to show students how people can use them to increase happiness and well-being.

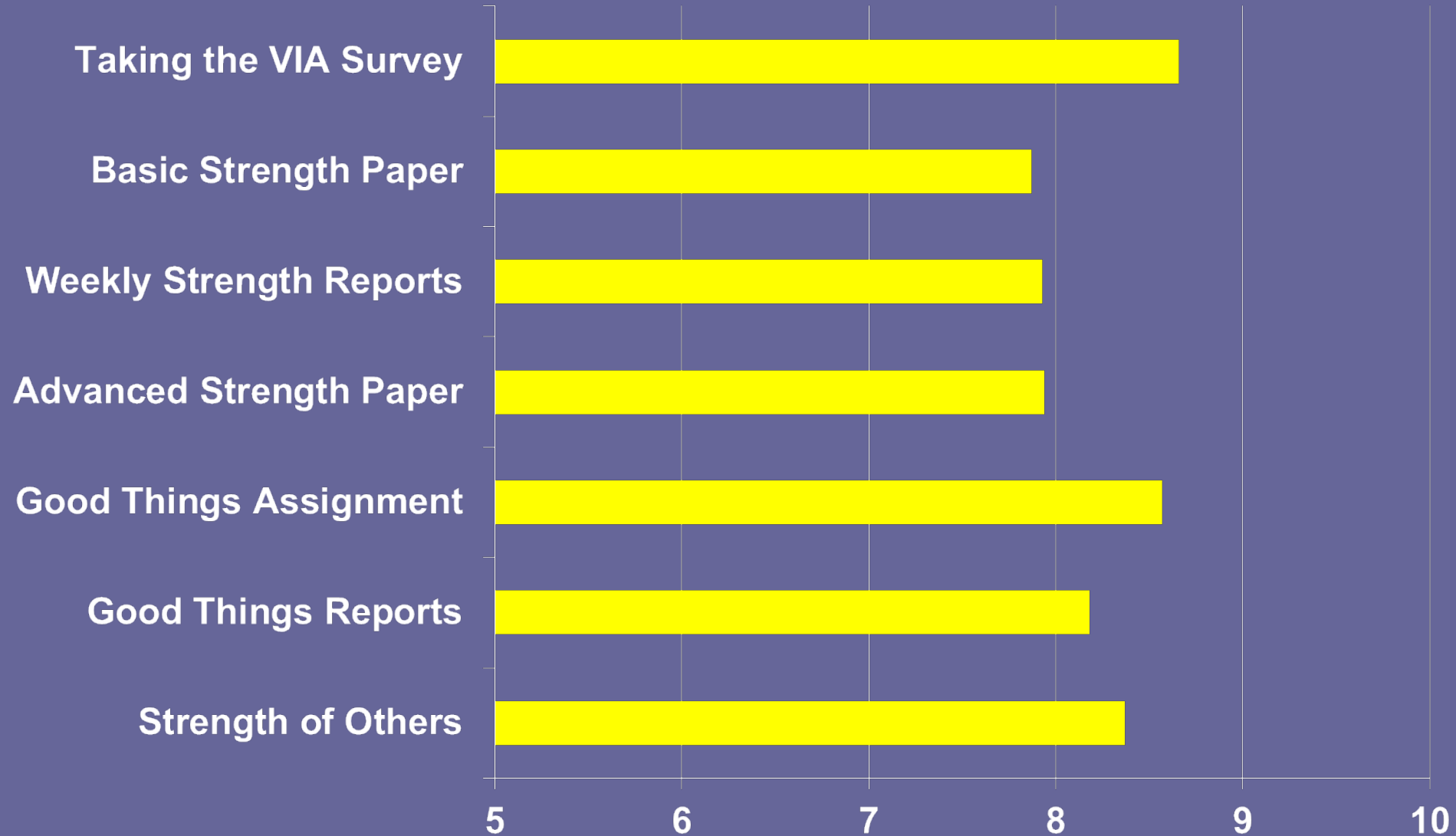
Positive psychology exercises are used to enable students to test and try them out in their lives.



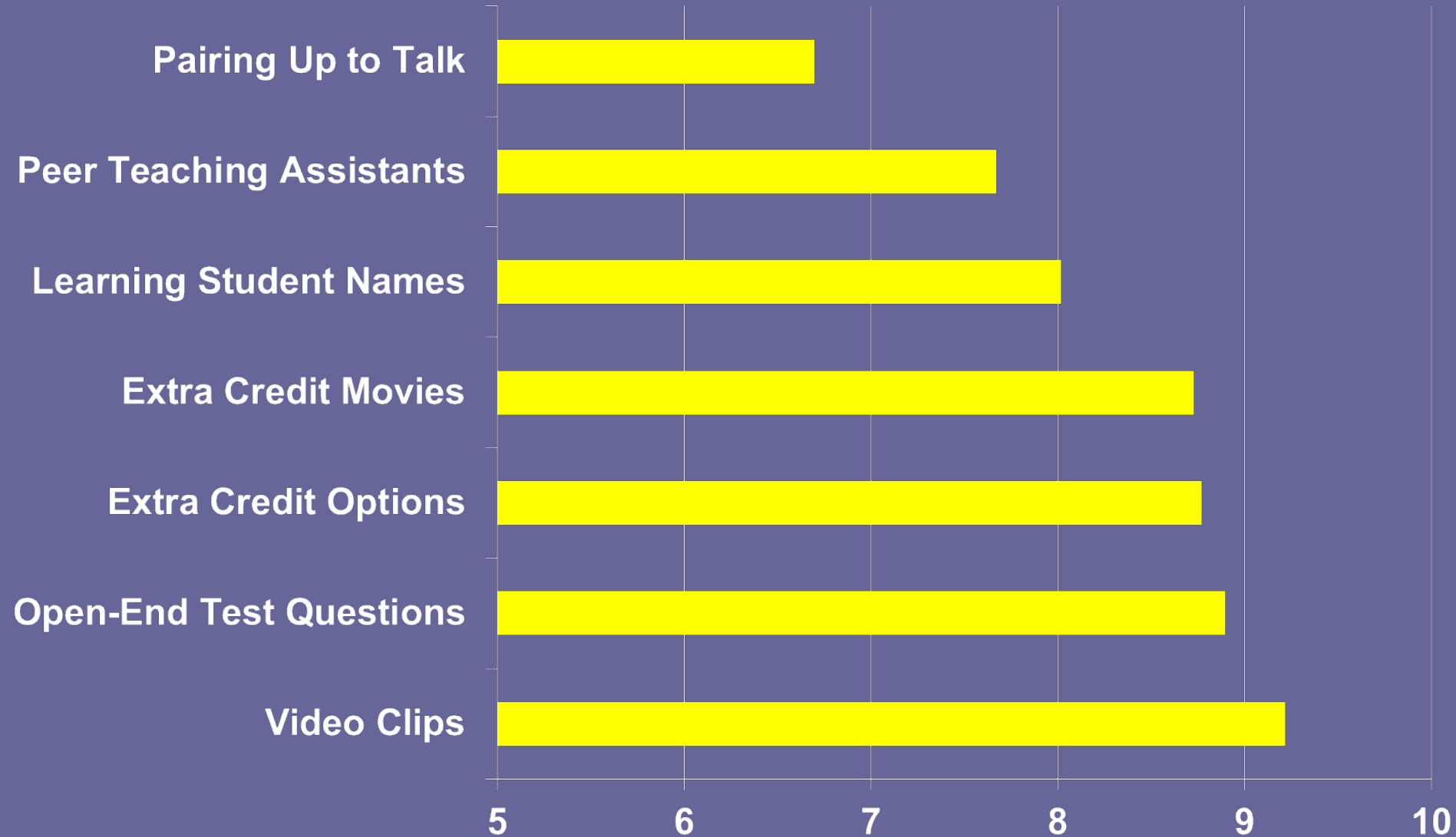
How beneficial are the typical elements of the class?



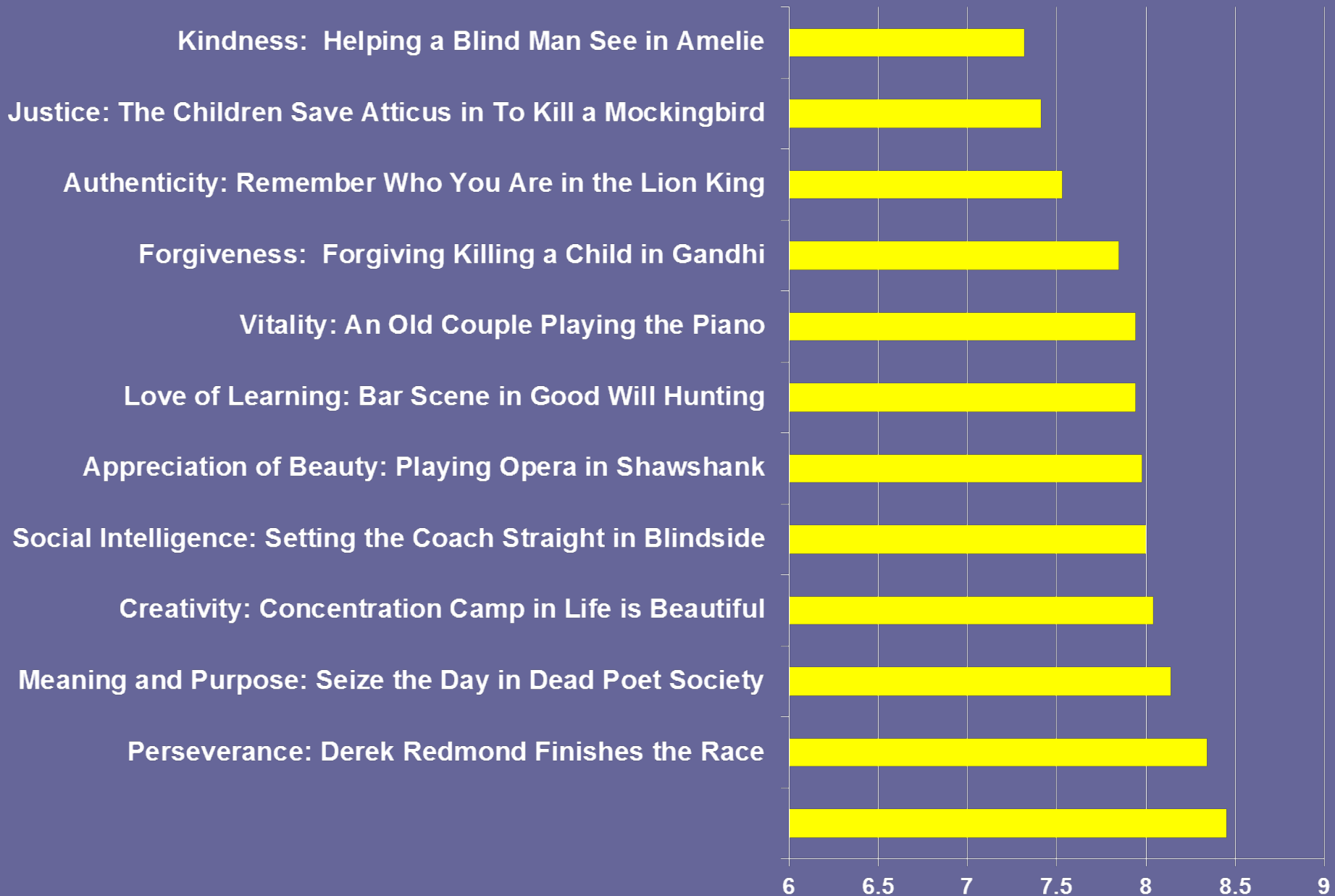
How beneficial are the positive psychology exercises?



How beneficial are the more unique elements of the class?



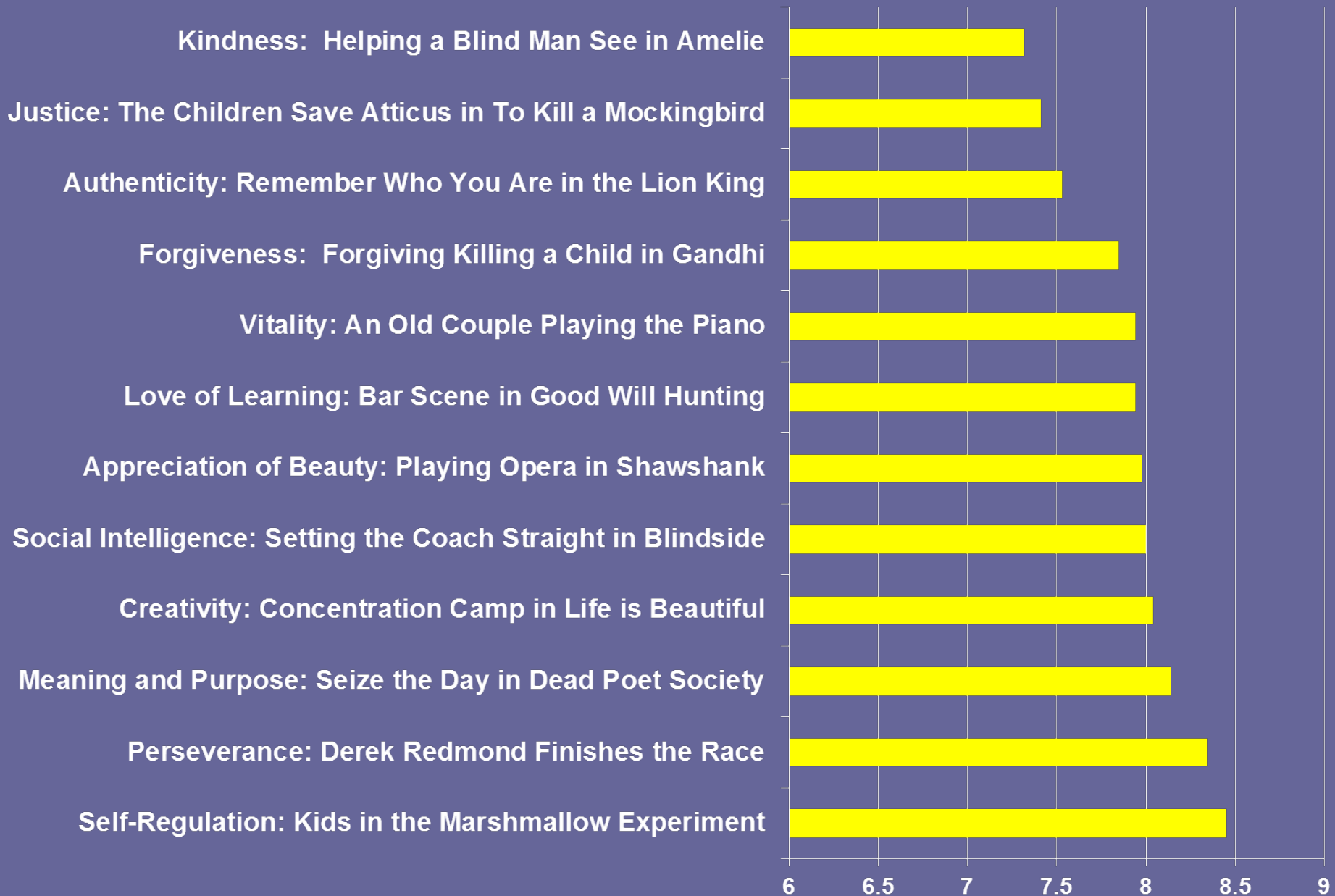
How beneficial were the video clips?



**Let's see, the very best of Hollywood
vs. the drama of psychology
experiments. Who wins?**



How beneficial were the video clips?





What about this class has enabled students to take a different path?



The continuing development and refinement based on the feedback of the students and teaching assistants.

The increasingly useful collection of video clips that best engage the students and illustrate the strengths.

Using the idea of the “hero’s journey” in stories and movies to inspire and motivate to use the strengths.

The exercises that engage the students and allows them to apply the material and see how it works in their lives.

The personal nature of the class included in learning their names and have peer teaching assistants.

Positive Psychology Lab



It grew out of the interest of students to continue to learn about positive psychology.

The smaller class (18-24 students) lends itself for really bringing positive psychology to life – it has been called “Positive Psychology Live.”

The Positive Psychology Lecture is a prerequisite and people apply to take it – usually about 60 Applications for 20 spots.

The lab has earned perfect ratings almost every semester it has been taught.

How is the course structured?

Everyone gives a presentation illustrating their top strengths and talking about how they can use them to reach their goals.

The whole class provides feedback on what they see as the strengths and positive qualities of their classmates.

Everyone is part of a team of 3-4 students who give a presentation on a group of strengths.

Everyone has at least one mentee and meets with at least 2 times and writes about it.

Everyone does one “positive psychology” exercise each week, writes about and rates it, and discusses it the following week.



How beneficial have these elements of the class been?



How beneficial have these weekly exercises or assignments been?



What has been most important in making this made this class successful?

Doing the individual presentations and getting feedback enables students to see the best in themselves.

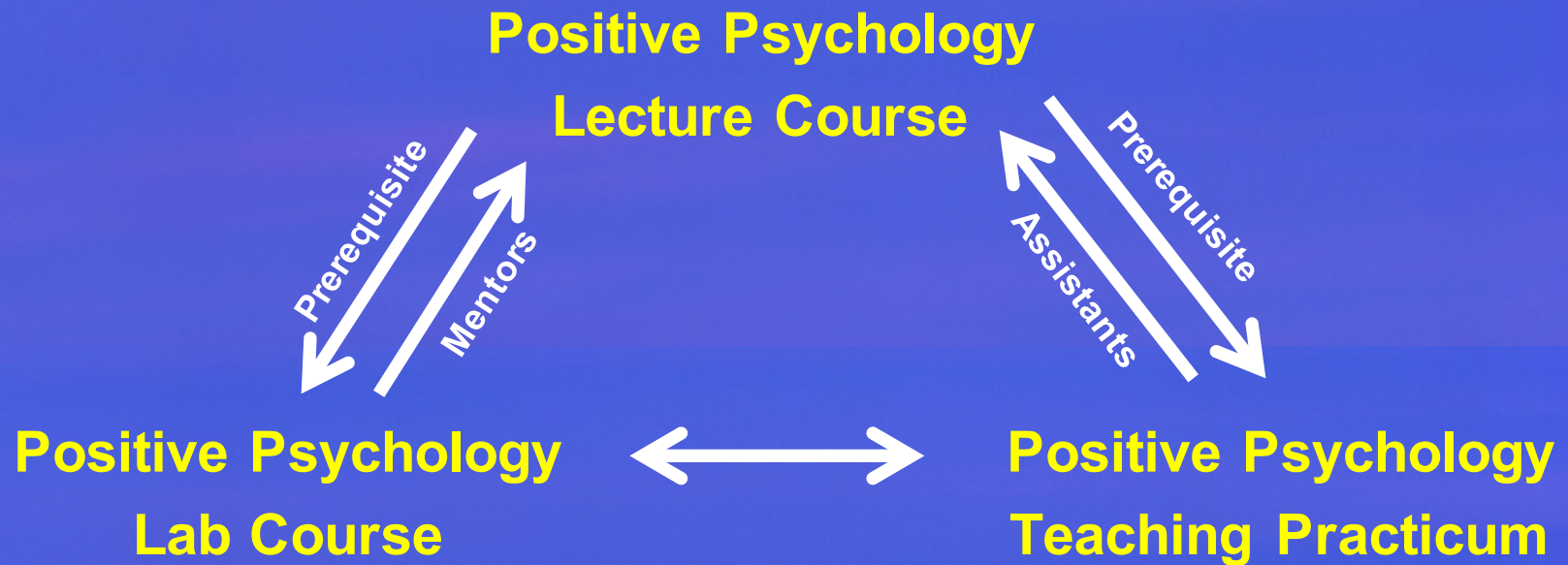
Seeing the individual presentations enables students to learn to see the best in others.

Mentoring other students enables students to put into practice what they have learned with others.

Doing the group presentations builds teamwork, community, and creativity in using the strengths.

Doing and discussing the exercises provides a lab for learning what works best for them and different people.

Progression of Positive Psychology at UNM



Positive Psychology Teaching Practicum

This includes 5-7 people who have had the lecture and fill out an application.



They are selected based on their GPA, how well they did in the class, the ability to work well with others, and their conscientiousness and GRIT.

They are each assigned approximately 33 students to learn their names, grade simple assignments, and work with throughout the semester.

They come to class and meet weekly with the instructor and grad TAs to discuss the class and improve it.

Why has the practicum been successful?

The students who become TAs are very interested in and engaged with positive psychology.

The class exercises lend themselves well to helping TAs to get to know and work with their students – e.g., writing about strengths, goals, good things.

TAs drawn on their own experience and creativity and that of their students to improve the class.

They value the opportunity to work with a group of students, get to know them, and help them learn about something that may really improve their lives.

Progression of Positive Psychology at UNM



Positive Psychology at the Movies

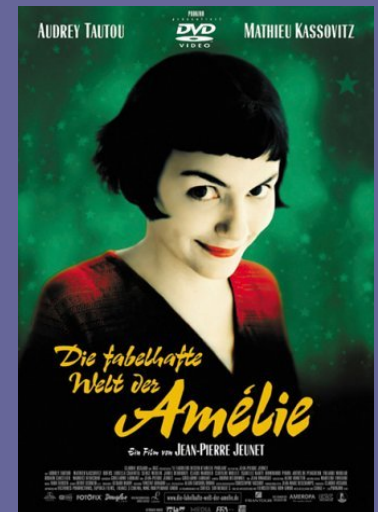
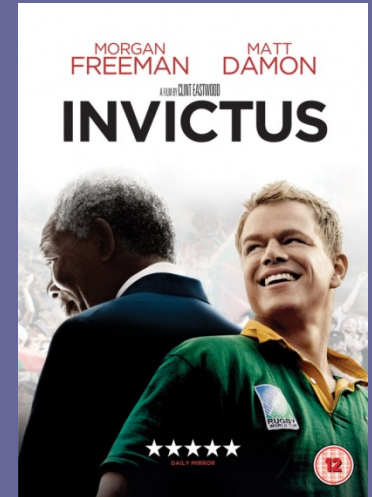
Positive psychology lecture and lab students receive extra credit.

The peer teaching assistants for the lecture class attend and help to run it.

There is a questionnaire about how the movie affects emotion and motivation.

There is a discussion about where how the movie illustrates positive psychology.

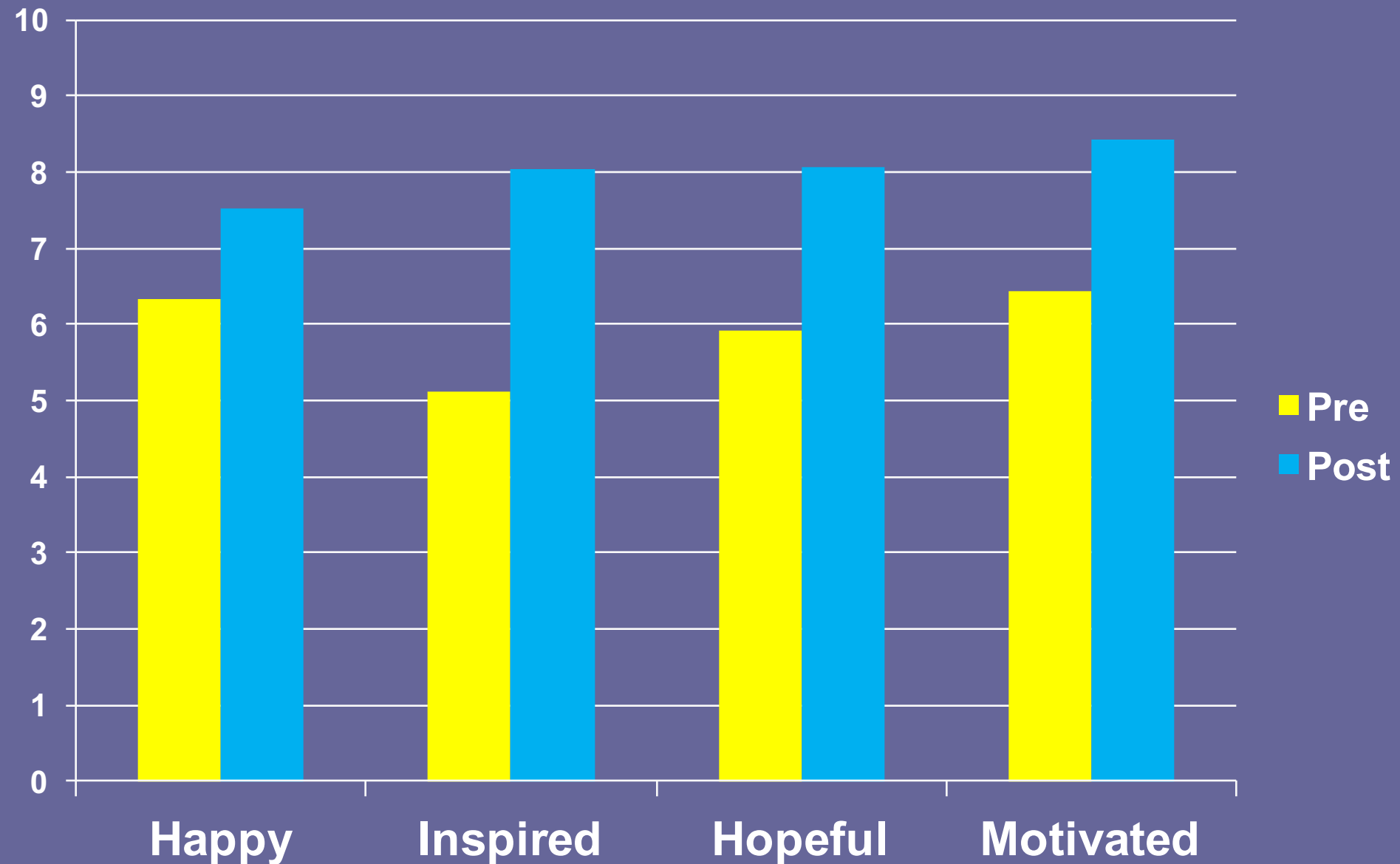
Friends and family members are invited and there is a potluck at the beginning.



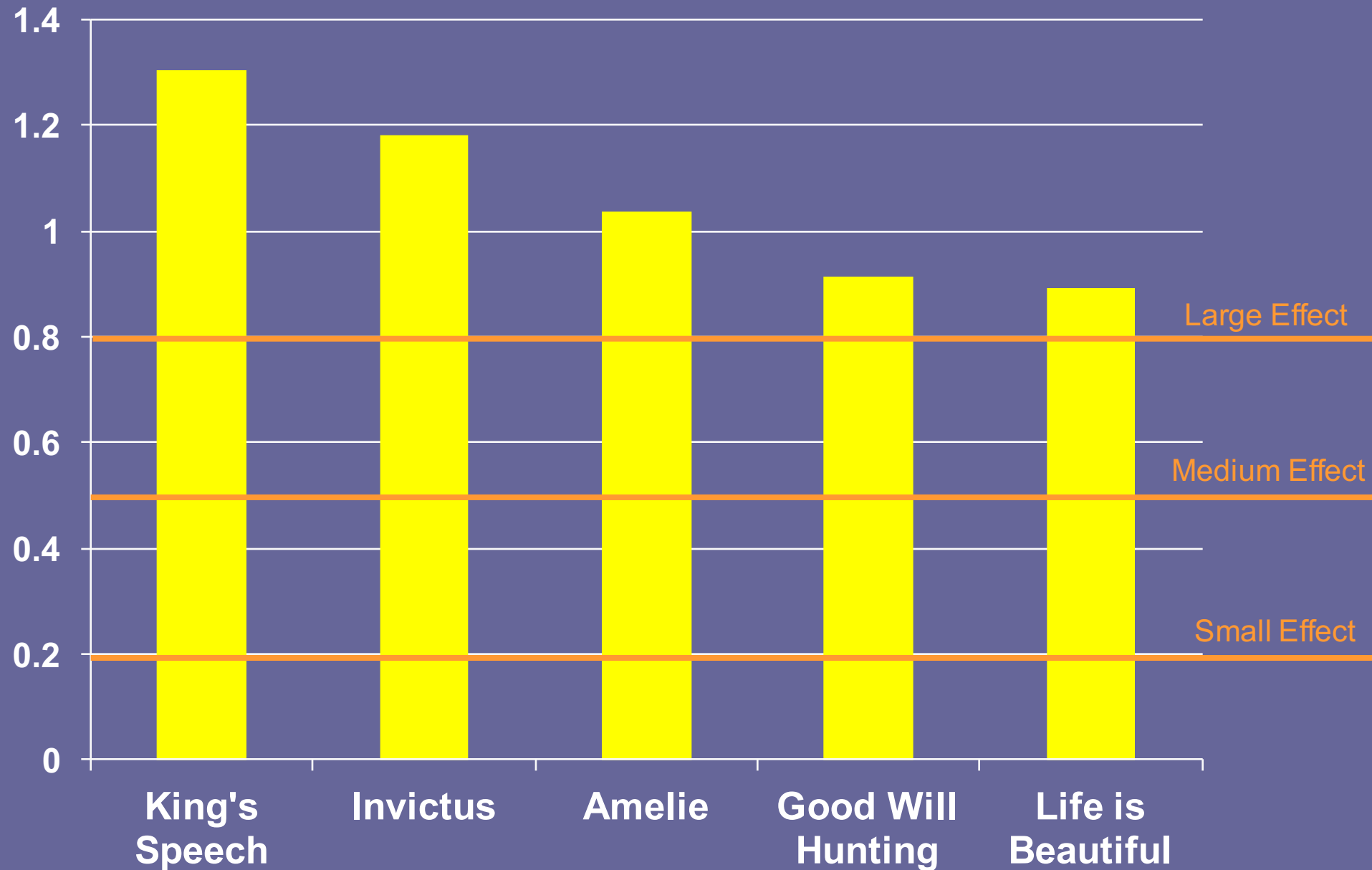
Movies Shown and Sample Size

Movie	Times Shown	Sample Size
Invictus	5	188
Amelie	3	119
Good Will Hunting	2	83
Life is Beautiful	1	40
King's Speech	1	24
Total	12	462

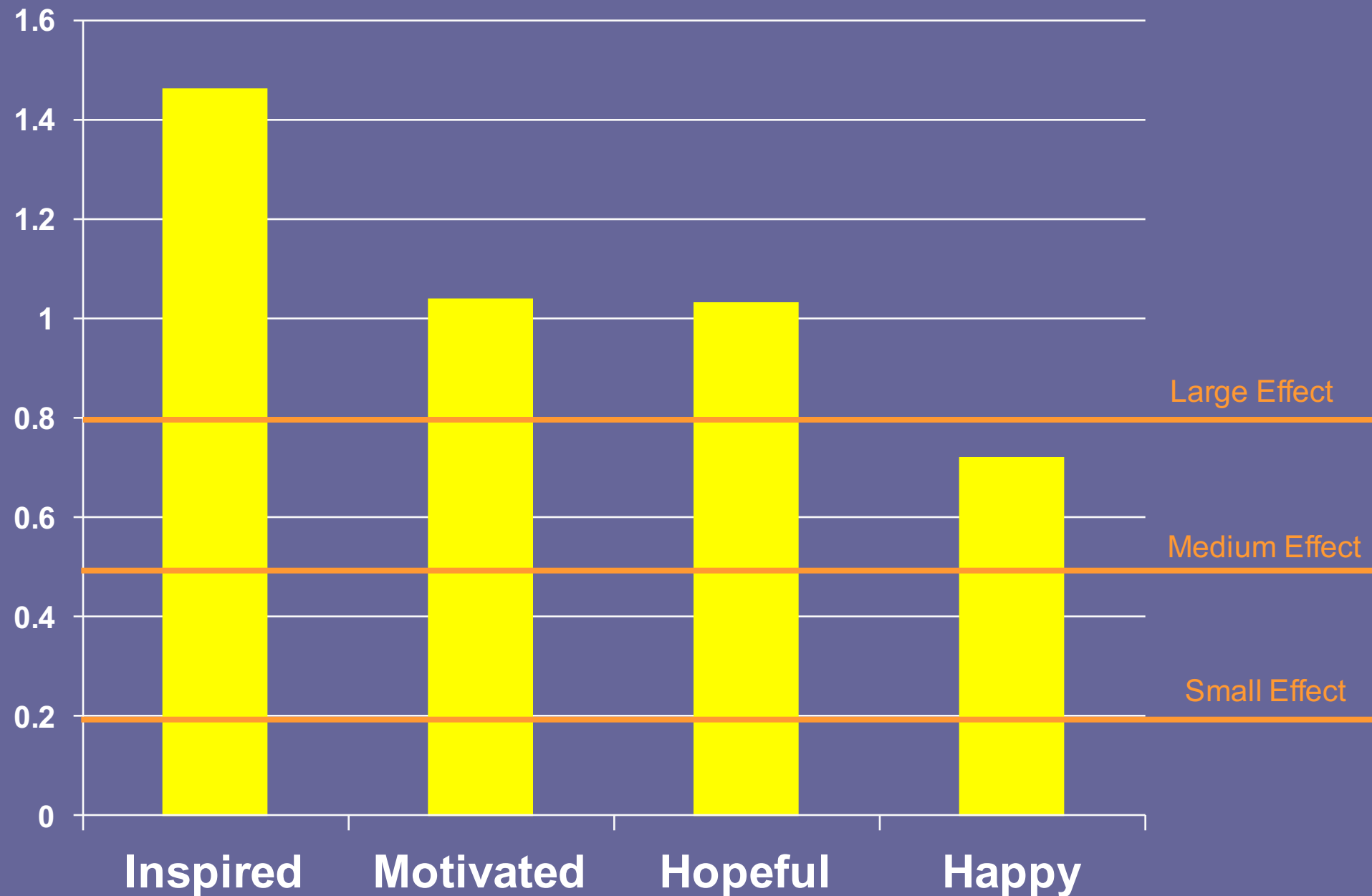
Pre and Post Scores Across All Movies



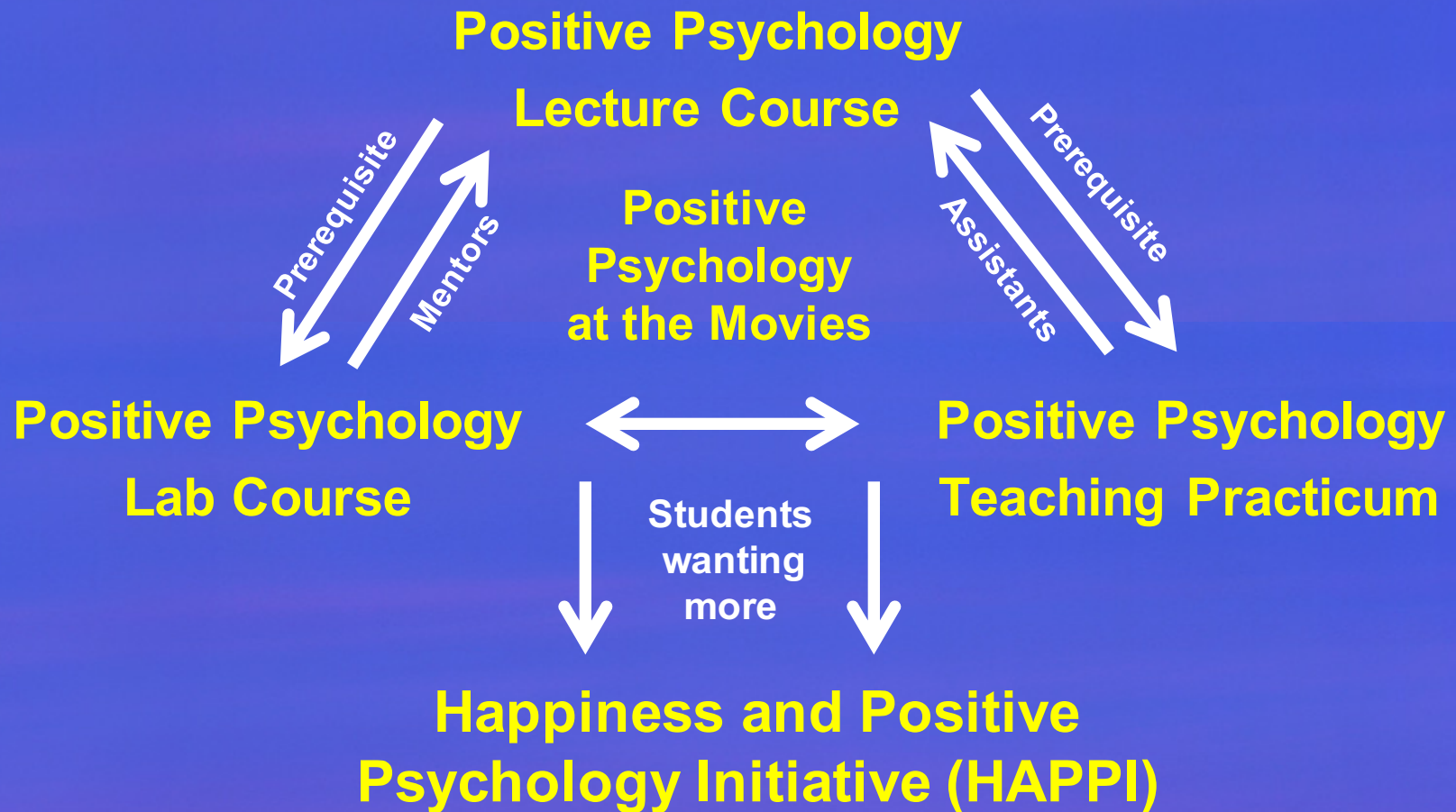
Mean Effect Size Across All Measures



Mean Effects Sizes Across All Movies



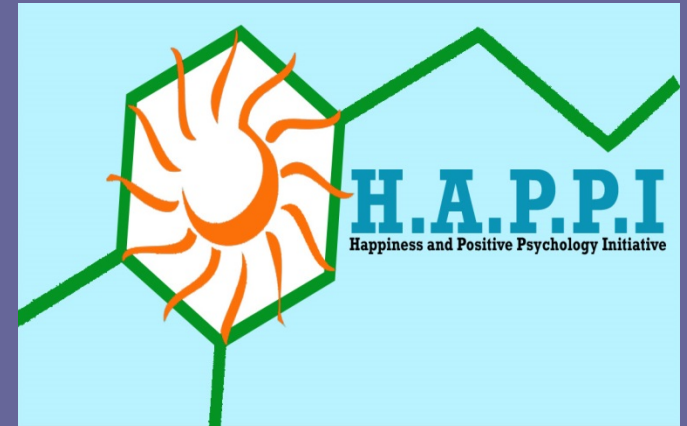
Progression of Positive Psychology at UNM



Happiness and Positive Psychology Initiative

HAPPI is a new student group at the University of New Mexico.

Weekly meetings with programs that focus on different strengths and aspects of well-being.



There are fun and engaging activities to build community and find ways to increase well-being in the group.

There is outreach to the university and local community to increase well-being outside of the group.

Contact Moriah Fiebiger at mofie18@unm.edu

Here is our best answer...



Or “Breaking Down Good”

Happiness Alliance of New Mexico



They lead efforts to better assess well-being and use the data to inform and influence public policy.

They have led a Happiness Awareness Week jointly sponsored with the positive psychology classes.

They have led efforts to assess and improve well-being in an Albuquerque neighborhood.

Members of the Happiness Alliance have attended and spoken at the positive psychology classes.

The positive psychology students and HAPPI members have become contributing members.

Contact Steve Poland at sfpoland@q.com


Outreach and Future Directions

PATH Planning Process: We have been engaged in a planning process called PATH that fits well with Rick Snyder's HOPE theory.

For College Students: We have taught the Psychology of College Success for first generation students and other at-risk students.

For High School and Middle School Students: We have done strength-focused mentoring for high school students and plan to expand for at-risk students.

For Mental Health Professionals: We have presented on how we use positive psychology to improve well-being and are presenting on its effective use in psychotherapy.

A photograph of a desert landscape at dusk or dawn. In the foreground, a dark cowboy hat lies on the sandy ground. The background features rolling hills and a prominent red rock cliff on the right side. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of blue, orange, and yellow.

**So what have we done to try to
bring positive psychology
to New Mexico?**

**And provide the
opportunity for
people to take a
different path...**

Positive Psychology in the Land of Enchantment

Main Ingredients



1. Positive Psychology Lecture Course
2. Positive Psychology Lab Course
3. Positive Psychology Teaching Practicum
4. Positive Psychology at the Movies
5. Happiness and Positive Psychology Initiative
6. Happiness Alliance of New Mexico



Thank You for Being Here



THE UNIVERSITY *of*
NEW MEXICO

**Correspondence concerning this presentation should
be sent to Bruce W. Smith at bwsmith@unm.edu**

The
End

