

from **Stuck in a Rut: The Role of Creative Thinking in Problem Solving and Legal Education**

Janet Weinstein  
California Western School of Law, [jweinstein@cwsl.edu](mailto:jweinstein@cwsl.edu)

Linda H. Morton  
California Western School of Law, [lmorton@cwsl.edu](mailto:lmorton@cwsl.edu)

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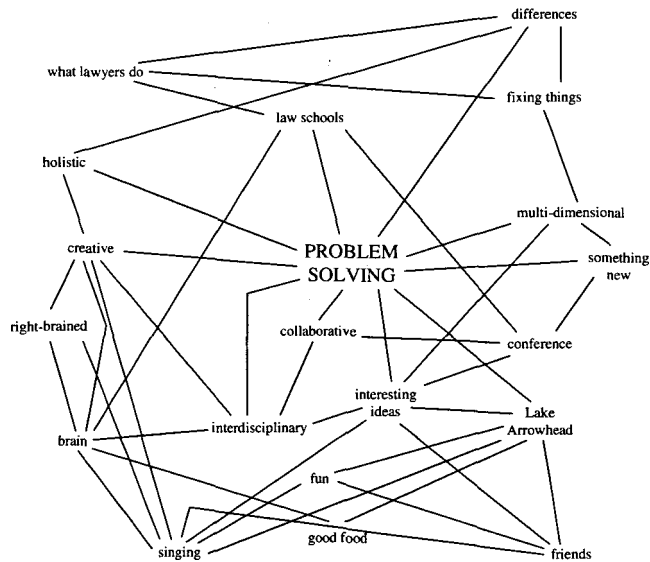
### C. *Mind-Mapping*

Word clustering, also known as mind-mapping, is a related method of word association.<sup>65</sup> The problem solvers write the problem out and then write down words that come to mind, randomly, as related to the problem. The words are written without any particular order all over a paper, and once that aspect is completed, lines are drawn connecting the words as connections come to mind. The brain function explanation for this technique is that, because there is no pre-defined logic to the way words are selected, the brain is free to come up with words without editing. Thus, words may come from many different pathways where some association with the problem is located. Once all of these pathways are expressed on paper, the brain continues the unedited process of finding connections between the various concepts; often more than one of these connections results in a creative idea.

Mind mapping is a useful technique for exploring research ideas. We used mind-mapping to design this topic for the International Clinical Conference at Lake Arrowhead. We began by writing “Problem solving” in the center of the paper. From there, we wrote ideas such as: “fixing things”; “what lawyers do”; “differences?”; “holistic”; “interdisciplinary”; “collaborative”; “brain”; “thinking”; “logical”; “right-brained”; “creative”; “multi-dimensional”; “skills”; “law schools”; “environment”; “resources”; “conference”; “Lake Arrowhead”; “friends”; “fun”; “good food”; “interesting ideas”. It looked something like this:

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<sup>65</sup> TONY BUZAN, *THE MIND MAP* (1996); EIFFERT, *supra* note 6, at 74.



After writing down all the thoughts that came to mind in considering what to write about problem solving, the connection proceeded as follows: “we want to do something different”; “what if we look at how the way the brain works affects problem solving?”; “since we’re dealing with the brain, let’s look specifically at the creative thinking process”; “we can use the information we have from other research on brain development, so it will be interdisciplinary”; “we can look at what it takes to do creative thinking and whether it is different in legal problem solving than in other areas”; “we can also look at whether law schools are providing what is needed to encourage creative thinking.”