being deeply influenced by it. In fact, the only negative comment from students is that despite several funny moments, the play is fundamentally sad. More specifically, students learn how to assess perspective-taking, identify ways in which one's role (e.g., doctor, nurse, patient, friend) or culture (e.g., organizational, occupational) might influence behavior, and recognize influences on message production and interpretation.

Our experience confirms research suggesting that "media content intended solely for entertainment purposes may result in . . .cognitive, affective, and behavioral impacts" (Neuendorf, 1990, p. 116). Exposure to, and analysis of, entertainment media can enhance student understanding of communication processes, such as perspective-taking, and may serve even as a catalyst to skill development.

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Teaching Research Methods Using a Problem-Based Learning Approach

Objective: To demonstrate the process of designing, executing, and reporting survey research.
Course: Research Methods

Teaching communication research methods can be an unwelcome challenge for some instructors. Students complain that the material is "too theoretical" or "there's too much math" and instructors complain that students stare blankly or refuse to appreciate the importance of the lecture material. However, learning about research methods, both qualitative and quantitative, is crucial for developing logical and critical thinking among undergraduate communication students (Frey, Anderson, & Friedman, 1998; Frey & Botan, 1988. Serendipitously, the teaching of research methods lends itself quite naturally to a problem-based learning approach (Edens, 2000). This activity provides students in an introductory communication research methods course with hands-on experience in designing and implementing a campus-wide telephone survey for a university client. The project integrates theory and practice by engaging students in multiple aspects of research. Not only were students living through the phases of the research process, but they were also conducting interviews, developing interpersonal and intergroup communication skills, writing reports, and making formal presentations. Such projects truly engage students in a learning process, enhancing their understanding of conceptual material and providing skills that are transferable to other courses and ultimately to the workplace.

The following activity was designed to introduce students to the theory and practice of survey research. For the activity, students are organized into teams to gather the background and skills needed to design and implement a short telephone survey for a university client. A leader for each team is assigned by the instructor and serves as a liaison with other team leaders, with the instructor, and with faculty experts on campus. Working self-sufficiently, the teams then coordinate with the larger group, and the project ultimately involves all students in issues of systematic sampling, questionnaire development, budgeting, interviewer training, and telephone interviewing. In concert with their hands on work for the survey project, students also learn principles of survey research methodology through lectures and readings. The project thus provides a practical context within which theoretical concerns come to life as do the consequences of methodological decisions.

I have used this problem-based, team approach on two occasions with two different University "clients." The advantage of a university client is that students are quickly intrigued by issues that affect their academic and social life and finding such clients can be accomplished in a variety of ways; both student-centered and instructor directed approaches have been successful. A student-centered approach involves students in a "brainstorming" activity in which they list a number of concerns they have regarding campus life (academic or otherwise). Once the concerns are outlined, a vote can be taken or consensus reached about which area they would like to research further as a class project. Once the problem area is identified, a student volunteer or the instructor then tracks down the relevant campus office or personnel to whom the project idea is to be "pitched." As the instructor, I have made these pitches, usually a quick telephone call explaining the students' interest in conducting the research and outlining the client's responsibilities (meeting once or twice with the students to be interviewed, and being available for a final presentation of findings).

If the instructor prefers to provide a project domain and client, he or she must be alert to concerns that are being raised among administrators regarding student academic or social life. The advantage of having a client chosen for the students is that they are immediately empowered to undertake the project.

The Activity

Following completion of this project, students should be able to (1) design a brief, reliable telephone survey instrument to meet client needs, (2) collect data using the survey, (3) tabulate data, (4) draw conclusions based on data, and (5) make recommendations to the client in a formal oral report.

Prior to embarking on this activity, it is helpful if students have been introduced to probability and non-probability sampling, and to the concepts of reliability and validity. Beyond that conceptual background, students require only field interviewing skills to embark on this activity. Since the first step for most teams is to interview a campus or community expert, students should have some prior training and practice in field methods and interviewing techniques. As the project unfolds, specific lecture topics are coordinated with the different phases of the activity (as outlined below) so that research-related skills and conceptual knowledge are developing alongside one another.

Depending on class size, organize the students into five teams of roughly equal number. Teams communicate through the team leaders (identified by the instructor) as well as through in-class progress reports and e-mail exchanges. The instructor maintains final executive power and wields that as necessary.

Team 1--Background. What does the client need? This team is primarily responsible for contacting the client, assessing needs, and arranging any follow-up that may be needed. Students interview the client about concerns, find out if there are specific questions the client would like to have answered, and draft preliminary questions for the survey instrument.

Team 2--Acquiring sample. How do we design the sampling approach? This team is responsible for making recommendations about sampling. The team also interviews the Data Coordinator (usually in the Office of the Registrar) for the university to find out how to get access to the study population for the survey (e.g., can the class have access to a stratified random sample of university students from the Registrar; if not, what is the alternative? What are restrictions on phoning versus mailing surveys?).

Team 3--Budget and project management. What would be implementation costs for the project if the class were paying for reproduction of the questionnaire, paying student interviewers, renting space for telephone survey lab, etc.? This group makes inquiries to discover potential costs of the project.

Team 4--Pilot testing and interviewer training. What do interviewers need to know to be reliable survey administrators? This group consults with faculty about survey administration, field tests the questionnaire, and provides interviewer training. This team writes the interviewer's manual that provides the standardized protocol that students must follow in recruiting respondents for the telephone survey.

Team 5--Materials design and layout. How should a questionnaire look so that it is easy to administer? After in-class group discussion to refine the questions proposed by the Background Team, this team designs the questionnaire and interviewer's manual.

Once the teams have been assigned, it is necessary to implement the study and establish a time line. Survey implementation involves the students and instructor as data collectors. Each completes 10 telephone interviews from their homes using the sampling frame provided by the Registrar. Each interviewer will need approximately 50 names to meet his/her quota in a timely fashion. Students must sign a form stating they will protect the identity of all potential respondents by keeping phone lists secure, using only respondent identification numbers, and returning all completed questionnaires and phone lists to the instructor upon completion of the study.

The time line for the project is proposed by the instructor, but flexibility is key for keeping the project going. The instructor should plan to provide class time for team members to meet (or to meet with faculty and staff as needed). This allows for immediate feedback to student concerns and saves time in the long-run.

Week 1. Groups contact client, faculty, and community experts regarding their team's assignment. Lecture topics include: Introduction to Survey Research, Review of Sampling Logic, and Approaches to Probability Sampling.

Week 2. Draft of questionnaire and interviewer manual turned in to instructor for review. Lecture topics include: Guidelines for Writing Survey Questions and The Role of the Survey Interviewer.

Week 3. Pilot Testing by students with classmates and friends. Lecture topics include: Reliability and Validity in Survey Research.

Week 4. A five-minute polished oral as well as a written team report on team's findings. Lecture topic include: Comparison of self-administered, in-person, and telephone survey approaches.

Week 5. Study implementation (begin data collection). Students administer telephone interviews from their homes using the sampling frame provided by Registrar. Lecture topics include: Ethical Issues in Study Participation, Data Analysis, and Reporting.

Week 6. Data analysis, discussion of findings. Presentation for client is designed and rehearsed. Lecture topics include: Univariate Analysis and Measures of Central Tendency.

Debriefing

Once the project is complete, the instructor must engage in evaluation of the project. For many students, doing team projects can be frustrating for students when it comes to evaluation. For this project, students were evaluated as individuals and as teams.

Individual evaluation by peers. Each student completes an evaluation form for every member of her or his group. The evaluation consists of the following open-ended items: How willing was the team member to schedule and attend meetings? When your team met, did this person contribute to ideas, was he/she helpful, interested, etc.? Did the team member make a genuine attempt to carry out the responsibilities assigned to him/her, including contributing to interviewing respondents? If not, provide examples.

Finally, each student assigns a letter grade (with criteria for those grades provided by the instructor) that best reflects the team member's overall contribution to the group project. These evaluations are confidential; students are assured that only the instructor sees them.

Individual evaluation by examination. A unit test assesses students' grasp of concepts using standard objective measures and an "application essay." Students apply their knowledge of study design to a novel situation in a mini-proposal. For example, ask them to outline how they would operationalize and implement a study of "what do university students think makes someone popular?"

Team evaluation. Each team makes a formal presentation, graded by the instructor, about their findings and concerns. This is a forum in which groups can exchange ideas and press further questions. Teams also submit a memo that summarizes their progress and future directions.

Appraisal

When using this problem-based approach to teach survey research, students have overwhelmingly reported appreciation for the variety of skills and knowledge needed for responsibly conducting this kind of study. They feel better equipped to design and execute survey research studies, and are able to confidently discuss the merits and failings of this approach for communication research. As data collection progresses and results are tabulated, students note questionnaire items they would change, add, or delete. This is clearly an aspect of learning that lectures alone cannot adequately produce: students experience how research is an iterative process, one of continuous refinement. Also, in my experience with this approach, high response rates (over 85%) produced a stunning reflection of the university's demographic profile. This demonstration of the power of an appropriate sampling technique, coupled with a high response rate, was probably more deeply appreciated by seeing such results than by simply talking about the related concepts.

From the instructor's perspective, interactions with students are more lively and rewarding. We interacted as peers as well as "expert-novices" since I was also contributing to the data collection effort. When the work is consequential (beyond grades for tests), students respond with real enthusiasm and creativity. Allowing time for the class to give a final oral presentation to the client is a key feature of the project. This can be very successful if well rehearsed and affords a sense of professionalism that is not often seen in the classroom. Students report taking great pride in their work, which results in new enthusiasm for their role as future researchers and communication professionals.

The students primary critique of the project was that the teams didn't seem balanced in their workloads. This is something that has to be worked out within each classroom depending on class size. In the future, I plan to use a client-based problem to structure the entire semester, thereby not only assuring more even distribution of workloads, but also demonstrating through practice how different methods are suited to particular types of questions. In other words, the semester could potentially be devoted to investigating aspects of a particular client-based concern through field methods, content analysis, survey research and experimental designs; facets of the problem and limitations of the methods used to study it would come to life under the different lenses. Although the teaching load is increased by this kind of planning and orchestration, so are the rewards of teaching research methods.

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Constructing Personal Relationships Through Conversation

Objective: To demonstrate how relationships are negotiated and constructed through conversation.

Course: Interpersonal

The social constructionist approach to human communication (as presented in Pearce, 1994; Stewart & Logan, 1997; Gergen, 1994, 1999) and relational theory (Bateson, 1972, 1979; Montgomery, 1992) assumes that relationships are created in conversation. That is, conversants construct or negotiate their relationships with each other as they implicitly and explicitly respond to each other. I have found that this process can be difficult to explain to beginning students and have developed two activities which help. I conduct a written exercise and then show a clip from the British film *Secrets & Lies* (Leigh, 1996) that reinforces what they learned from the exercise. Together, these activities lead to a better understanding of how relationships are constructed in conversation. I use these exercises in the unit on relationships in my sophomore level interpersonal communication class.

The Activity

To begin, I ask students to divide a sheet of paper into three columns. I ask them to write the initials of an acquaintance at the top of the first column, a good friend on the second column, and their most intimate friend on