

Instructional Development

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Just Us, an ongoing training and discussion group for faculty and staff, addresses issues of social justice, particularly in the classroom. These issues revolve around creating curriculum and/or programming to address cultural competence and racism as well as establishing a more welcoming learning climate. Three instructors, Stephen Castleberry, Paula Pedersen, and David Beard, offer the following examples of exercises they have embedded into their courses to develop empathy, ethics, and environmental justice, and to raise questions about our ethical obligations as teachers and researchers.

Learning to Hear the Screams

--Stephen Castleberry, Marketing

Decisions that we make in our lives have consequences, sometimes with happy results for ourselves and others and sometimes with unhappy results. Before they make decisions, students need to be informed of the potential ethical ramifications of those decisions. For example, we create a product that serves some group of consumers in a real and useful way, makes money for our company's stockholders, but at the cost of adding pollution to our air and making it hard for all to breathe. Some people end up being thankful for a decision made because their jobs or lives are improved. But others end up with a lower quality of life. The resulting frustration, anger, harm, even death (I'll refer to all of these reactions as "screams") may be obvious for the world to see.



Sometimes though, decision-makers just don't hear those screams. Why not? Maybe they don't want to hear them. Maybe they've not even considered the possibility that others might be harmed by their actions, and, thus, that someone might be screaming. Maybe they're aware of the screams, but their desire for the good things in life (income, the chances of raises and promotions) prevent them from attaching much importance to the screams.

So what does this have to do with teaching and learning? In many of our disciplines, when students graduate, they will be asked to make decisions or follow orders from superiors which may result in harm to others. Our students must realize the potential implications of making such decisions or following these dictates from upper management, while developing an awareness of the pain of those who may be affected or harmed by such decisions. Such a focus is often termed "taking a stakeholder perspective." Of course, many would argue we should encourage people to realize the implications to *all* affected parties (i.e., stakeholders) for our decisions. In other words, we want our students to learn to hear the screams and exhibit empathy. In the Spring, 2011 issue of the Phi Kappa Phi **FORUM** which, by the way focuses on empathy, it is defined as "...our ability to identify what someone else is thinking or feeling and to respond to that person's thoughts and feelings with an appropriate emotion." (p. 10). An appropriate emotion might lead them to a more ethical decision. In fact, the term "sentimental ethics" may apply here, strengthening cognition with feeling.

How can we help students to hear the screams of those who are affected negatively by our actions? We've used many learning tools. For a concrete example, let's refer to a consumer products firm that decided to sell infant formula to mothers in Third World countries in the 1970s. While at first blush this sounds harmless (and perhaps even helpful and desirous), a deeper look at the issue reveals the potential for serious consequences for mothers, families, and, of course, infants. This corporate decision spurred a cycle of financial issues for the consumers. For instance, mothers spent money to buy formula then didn't have enough money for food and necessities for other family members; mothers diluted the infant formula with too much water, which in some cases was contaminated, in order to make the formula last longer,

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but instead resulted in poorly nourished and/or sick infants. Further, the infant formula was argued to be less nutritious and provide fewer immunity-improving qualities than mother's milk. But of course, there are "winners" in this exchange: The company selling the infant formula to these mothers profited.

The question is: How do we get our students to be able to hear the screams of those negatively affected by the decision? In this case, the screams came from mothers whose babies died from malnutrition or infection, from starving siblings, and from overworked medical clinic workers trying to provide treatment to the affected infants, and from others harmed by the decision to sell the infant formula.

Classroom discussion is one method that helps students hear the screams. Faculty and students can provide documented examples (from websites, published studies, ...) of those who are harmed as a result of decisions and practices. In this case, reading actual case studies and quotations from mothers affected by the infant formula to paint a word picture can be an effective way to bring the situation to life and to help students realize the ramifications of decisions. With suitable warning and an introduction to the topic, the following phrasing can help frame the discussion:

Suppose that, as we are making the decision about whether we should sell the infant formula in Third World countries, we had surrounding us in this room the caskets of those infants who would die as a direct result of this decision. What if there were forty tiny infant caskets with their mothers weeping next to them along that wall over there, and that wall over there? Would your decision be the same? Because, whether you like to visualize it or not, that is what will happen if we go forward with this plan.

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Providing imagery can help students better conceptualize the impact of a decision. Pictures of deceased infants, video interviews of mothers negatively affected by using the formula, visualizations and/or audios of distraught mothers, and video documentaries that expose the situation and the consequences are all effective ways to make hearing the screams actually possible. In some cases it may even be possible to bring in a guest speaker who has experienced the harm done by the practice and can speak to the results of that decision on a personal level.

Another effective strategy is bringing in an expert with first-hand experience. People who have heard the screams can bring the emotional intensity of the situation to life. For example, a physician who worked and lived in Third World countries affected by the infant formula and who saw first-hand the results of the practice sat in on the classroom discussion about the practice. This has been the most powerful method I've seen to help students get a real sense of what's going on.

I want my students to become empathetic so they can be ethical. Being able to identify with the feelings of others starts with learning to listen.

Wearing Another's Shoes

--Paula Pedersen, Psychology

It's easy to pretend that all decisions we make help people, and have no, or few, negative consequences. But for those situations where this is not the case, we need to help our students (and ourselves) hear the screams. In my Human Sexuality course, after my students read about topics such as stages of coming out, models of sexual orientation (Kinsey and Klein), and other relevant resources, I make the following assignment.

This assignment utilizes a pedagogical technique similar to role-play, where I ask you to step into the shoes of another and answer the questions accordingly. You have already explored your attitudes around sexual difference with the Riddle Scale, as well as your own sexual orientation using the Klein and Kinsey scales. Now, I want you to imagine an individual whose sexual orientation is different from your own.

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The assignment asks you to apply your understanding of the concepts in Chapter 13 through writing letters from different perspectives.

- A. As this person, write a 1-2 page letter to a significant family member or friend “coming out” about your sexuality. The person you are writing to will likely have a difficult time understanding, and maybe even accepting, this. Using what you have learned in this unit along with additional web resources, include in your letter your understanding of your sexual orientation and what that means. As well as an exercise in empathy, your letter should reflect the literature and your understanding of sexual orientation from the perspective of the letter writer.
- B. Now write a 1-2 page response to your letter above. You are now the family/friend who believes that your sexual orientation is wrong for some reason. Choose whichever counter argument you want and be sure to cite resources that this particular person might use in writing his/her letter.
- C. Finally, write a paragraph or two (whatever it takes) sharing any reactions or reflections from this exercise.

This assignment, more than any other in any class I teach, is often cited by students as the “most difficult and the most powerful.” They usually say that the second letter was more difficult for them to write than the first because they actually have the opportunity to explore some of the resources that are often used to condemn queer individuals. My queer students who are out sometimes use the activity to create a parody around “coming out” as straight (a great lesson for other students in the class). Others have actually written such a letter and sent it. I have had students who say in Part C that although they still “don’t agree” that homosexuality is right, they have an increased empathy for individuals who “have to write and receive such letters.”

This exercise helps students understand where the shoe pinches. A little discomfort creates the dissonance that facilitates understanding and learning.

Researching the Literacy Practices of the Ethnically, Economically, and Spiritually “Other”

--David Beard, *Writing Studies*

In WRIT 4300/5300, “Research Methods for the Study of Writing,” students are exposed to qualitative research on the literacy practices of the ethnically and economically and spiritually “other.” Questions about the objectivity of the researcher as he/she accounts for the practices of those so different from them are raised. The class challenges the idea of objectivity in research, reminding students that they enter research with their own complex subjectivity intact. As such, their actions are not neutral, but may have powerfully disruptive effects on the subjects of their research. They must learn to listen for these effects. Students resonate with and respond sharply to James Moffett’s explorations of literacy. Moffett claims that

Literacy is dangerous and has always been so regarded. It naturally breaks down barriers of time, space, and culture. It threatens one’s original identity by broadening it through vicarious experiencing and the incorporation of somebody else’s hearth and ethos. So we feel profoundly ambiguous about literacy. Looking on it as a means of transmitting our culture to our children, we give it priority in education, but recognizing the threat of its backfiring we make it so tiresome and personally unrewarding that youngsters won’t want to do it on their own, which is of course when it becomes dangerous.

Teaching and researching literacy is about the transmission of values and the challenging of values, challenges that can undermine one’s community, religious or ethnic identity. We must respect those identities, as teachers and researchers, and we must respect the damage to those identities that careless research and careless teaching can catalyze. If we don’t listen, we fail to fulfill our ethical obligations as teachers and researchers.

Then, readings from Molefi Kete Asante’s “Afrocentric Idea” raise the question of whether appeals to objectivity are, perhaps, also skewed. Students attempt to apply Afrocentric models for literary and rhetorical criticism to Vietnamese texts. We then discuss whether European Enlightenment ideas about researcher objectivity may be as inappropriate to the study of African-American cultures as Afrocentric theories are inappropriate to the Vietnamese culture. If so, what, then must we as researchers do to assure that we understand those of other cultures, other socioeconomic backgrounds, and other spiritual backgrounds appropriately?

Moffett, James. “Censorship and Spiritual Education.” *English Education* 21.2 (1989): 70-87. Print.

Cross-Cultural Simulations Facilitated by IDS

As part of its commitment to improving educational access for all and internationalizing and diversifying curriculum, IDS has been building its library of resources dedicated to these issues. We'd like to give a brief overview of our simulation resources.

If you are teaching a course where engaging in a cross-cultural simulation can bring to light intercultural and diversity dynamics, IDS can help facilitate a variety of cross-cultural simulations including:

Bafá Bafá, A Cross-Culture Simulation

by R. Gary Shirts

What happens in Bafá Bafá? Participants live and cope in two-contrasting "foreign" cultures in this simulation and then discuss and analyze the experience. The Alpha culture is a warm, friendly, patriarchal society with strong in-group, out-group identity. The Beta culture is a foreign-speaking, task-oriented culture. Once the participants learn the rules, customs and values of "their" culture, they visit the other culture. The visitor is generally bewildered and confused by the strangeness of the foreign culture.

Bewilderment often turns to intolerance and hostility once the visitor returns home. "They're strange, real strange, that's all I can say. They're making funny sounds and weird gestures. Just be careful when you go over there." But in the post-simulation discussion they come to understand that there were reasons behind the behavior they observed. With this realization their attitudes change from one of hostility to understanding. Through discussion this experience is then generalized to attitudes towards other groups in the real world.

Why Bafá Bafá? The Bafá Bafá simulation is often used to introduce the notion of culture, intercultural interaction, and culture shock. It requires about 90 minutes and a minimum of 20 participants to achieve the maximum learning results. It can help to

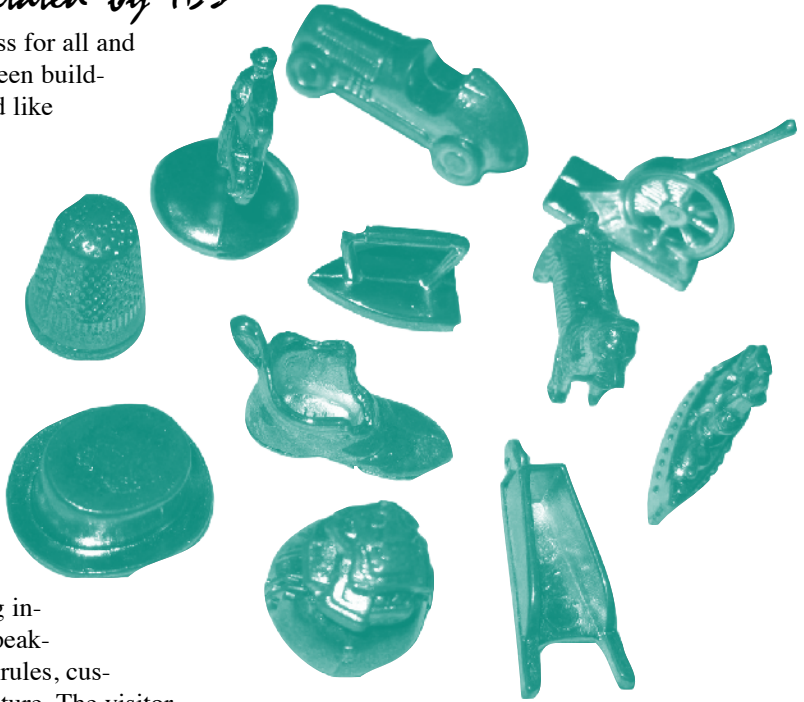
- Motivate participants to rethink their behavior and attitude toward others
- Allow participants to examine their own bias and focus on how they perceive differences
- Examine how stereotypes are developed, barriers created, and misunderstandings magnified
- Identify diversity issues within the organization that must be addressed.

Aid to Minorians

(Adapted by Shelley Smith from Robert Kohls, Tad Edlich, Margo Kiely, and Bill Hoffman): This version of "Aid to Minorians" takes about 45 minutes to complete and can be used with a group of 15 or more. It was designed to help students in education, students studying abroad in developing countries, civic engagement participants, and health workers who could be working with nondominant and refugee populations understand the difficulties of "educating" culturally different others. It also helps identify the fine line that exists between "education" and "cultural imperialism." It raises a number of questions about assimilation versus adaptation, the ability to communicate difference in a way that promotes and reflects mindfulness, as well as the impact of cultural values and behaviors on communication and understanding. The inclusion of different communication behaviors and cultural values reflect some of the real issues that arise in intercultural interactions.

The Albatross

The Albatross simulation takes about 45 minutes and can be performed with any size group. It provides an opportunity for participants to observe another culture and learn about the powerful effect of underlying cultural assumptions on our perceptions of people and events. During the simulation, participants observe certain ritualistic behaviors by the members of the Albatross culture. Participants are then asked to interpret and come to conclusions about the culture. The exercise provides a common experience for all participants to discuss how we should approach learning about cultural differences before we make judgments about their meaning.



Ecotonos

Requiring a minimum of 15 participants, the Ecotonos simulation takes between 75 and 90 minutes to complete. It allows participants to experience the way culture is created and how it affects communication and decision-making behaviors in organizations. This simulation opens the discussion about ways of meeting the challenges diversity poses in real world tasks and helps identify strategies for communicating across differences. The simulation can help

- Emphasize connections between culture, communication, decision-making, and task effectiveness
- Identify diversity concerns important to the participants
- Develop greater understanding of the implications of that diversity
- Develop skills for increasing effective communication across that diversity.

Barnza

Barnza is a simple game that anyone can facilitate. It requires 20-30 minutes and several decks of cards. The instructional guide provides clear instructions and debriefing suggestions in Spanish, French, and German, which makes them very useful in teaching cultural dynamics in languages classes. It brings to light the difficulties encountered when the “cultural rules” vary from one place to another.

If a cross-cultural simulation would be useful for achieving your course objectives, please contact IDS through Jason Ellis, jellis2@d.umn.edu to arrange.

Communication Tools

Tool Comparison Best Use

April 28, 2011

by Bruce Reeves and Amanda Evans

Tool Name	Encrypted Connection	People outside UMN?	Text Chat	Audio Chat	Audio and Video Chat	Screen Sharing	Ease of Set up
Skype	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Easy
Google Talk	yes	yes	yes	yes (plug-in needed)	yes (plug-in needed)	Not currently	Easy
UMConnect	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Easy if text chat only, more difficult when moving across grid towards screen sharing

Please download the [Skype vs. UMConnect PDF](http://blog.lib.umn.edu/cedarumn/repository/Skype_UmConnect.pdf) for more information: http://blog.lib.umn.edu/cedarumn/repository/Skype_UmConnect.pdf

For more information about [Google Talk](http://www.google.com/talk/start.html), visit: <http://www.google.com/talk/start.html>

Pearls to Puppies: Partnerships in Service of Learning

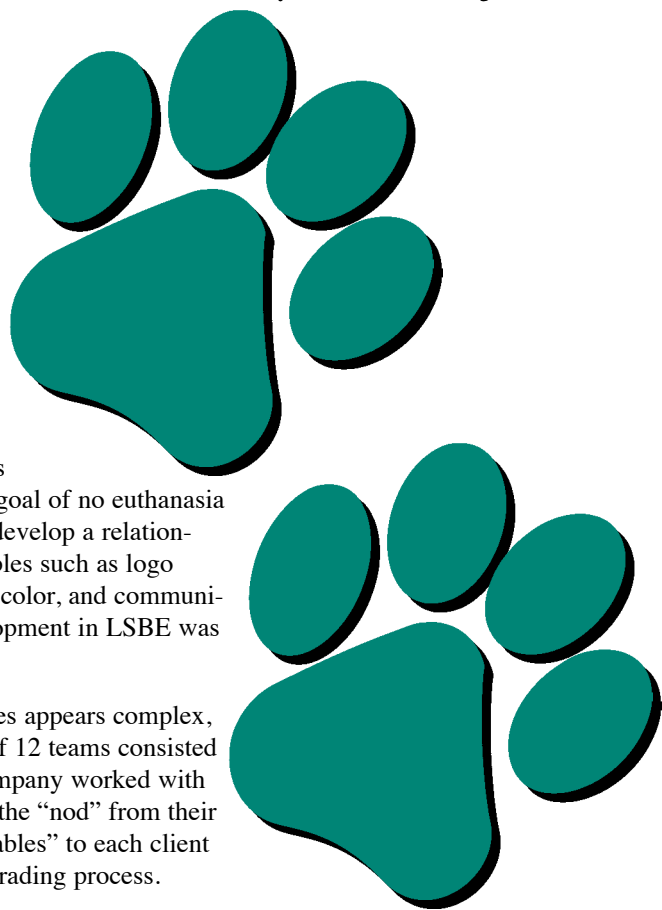
Taking an interdisciplinary approach to teaching, John Kratz from Marketing (LSBE) and Janice Kmetz from Art and Design (SFA) paired two of their classes in a semester-long service learning project. Kratz's Advanced Marketing Communication class of 36 students and Kmetz's Graphic Design 2 class of 14 learned what it was like to have real clients, not hypothetical ones.

Truly a "pearls to puppies" assortment of businesses, their students worked with these six clients: Sproutlings, a children's boutique; Accuflexcoatings, "superior" surfacing for roads and bridges; Lola's to Go, a family-owned restaurant catering to customers on the go; Bagley's, a fine quality jeweler; First National Bank of Chisholm, a full-service, independently owned community bank established in 1905; and Animal Allies Humane Society, whose Campaign for Zero works toward the goal of no euthanasia of healthy animals. During the semester the teams worked to develop a relationship with the company or organization while creating deliverables such as logo designs, web site redesign, corporate branding with image and color, and communication/marketing campaigns. The Center for Economic Development in LSBE was instrumental in finding clients.

Although combining the forces of two classes from two colleges appears complex, the logistics for setting up the teams were quite simple. Each of 12 teams consisted of 2 to 3 marketing students plus one design student. Each company worked with two interdisciplinary teams who competed with each other for the "nod" from their collaborating business. The team presenting the best "deliverables" to each client at the end of the semester won, bringing authenticity into the grading process.

This partnership is just one of many examples of service learning occurring at UMD through the Office of Civic Engagement. Kahne and Westheimer in "In the Service of What?" define service learning succinctly. "[It] makes students active participants in service projects that aim to respond to the needs of the community while furthering the academic goals of students." Service learning activities seek to promote students' self-esteem, to develop higher-order thinking skills, to make use of multiple abilities, and to provide authentic learning experiences -- all goals of current curricular transformation efforts.

For more information about the numerous services and activities provided by the Office of Civic Engagement (OCE), or to undertake a project in service of learning, consult with OCE for assistance in integrating civic engagement into your course. OCE will also give you recommendations for and connections to placement sites and provide mini-grants to support your project. Not sure where to start, OCE also offers workshops and seminars.



IDS Advisory Board

The Instructional Development Service (IDS) Advisory Board is charged with

- Assisting IDS in periodically reviewing its mission
- Working with IDS to establish measurable goals and objectives
- Helping evaluate progress toward satisfying those stated goals
- Providing feedback and advice to IDS regarding ideas and programs
- Promoting the goals and activities of IDS to the campus community.

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