

Engaging Sources: Helping Students Learn to Read for Problems

Sample Lesson Plan for Teaching with *The Craft of Research*

This small-group activity asks students to discuss a brief section of a research article and to reflect on the choices the article's author has made in citing sources.

Objective

To help students understand how researchers use sources to shape their own argument or approach to a topic. By “reading for problems” as *The Craft of Research* authors suggest, students should begin to see how they can use sources to identify unresolved issues and new areas of inquiry for themselves.

Instructor Preparation

Identify a research article that you would like students to work with. Ideally, this should be a familiar reading that you have previously assigned to the entire class or something closely related to recent classroom discussions. Select a section of the article in which the author makes frequent reference to other sources. Often, the introductory section of an article is ideal, since that is typically the place where an author will identify problems with previous research and establish the current state of knowledge about the article's topic. The selection should be brief—a few paragraphs or 1-2 pages at most—so that students can focus closely on a few examples.

Student Preparation

To prepare for the class session, have students read *The Craft of Research* Chapter 6: Engaging Sources (pp. 85-104) and review the section of the research article you have chosen for this activity (see above).

Activity Directions, Part 1 (20-30 minutes)

Divide students into pairs or small groups and have them analyze the research article excerpt you have chosen using the Reading for a Problem criteria listed on pages 89-92 of *The Craft of Research*. In particular, have students respond to these questions:

- **How has the author used sources to identify areas of creative agreement?**
(Does the author build on areas of consensus in his or her field?)
- **How has the author used sources to identify areas of creative disagreement?**
(Does the author point to areas where experts disagree or knowledge is lacking?)
- **What problem will the author address in his or her research?**
(How is the author's work responding to the areas of agreement/disagreement?)

After 10-15 minutes of discussion in groups, students can report their findings back to the entire class.

Activity Directions, Part 2 (20-30 minutes)

If time allows, you can have students engage in a second round of small-group discussion by having them now apply the questions from part one of the activity to their own research. What areas of creative agreement or disagreement have they discovered in the sources they have read so far? How can they use those sources to help focus their own project? If there isn't time for this during the same class session, it could be assigned as homework (students could submit a journal entry or research progress report with their responses) or it could be part of a future class session.

** The example below is the first page of a research article with comments that reflect the kind of observations you might guide students toward in this activity. **

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Human trafficking: factors that influence willingness to combat the issue

Katherine L. Honeyman, Arthur A. Stukas, Mathew D. Marques

Department of Psychology and Counselling, La Trobe University

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Arthur Stukas, Department of Psychology and Counselling, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.
E-mail: A.Stukas@latrobe.edu.au

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Abstract

Human trafficking involves severe violations of human rights and social action is required to combat it. Past research has identified emotional reactions to victims of trafficking, as well as the perceived cost and efficacy of actions, as significant predictors of willingness to get involved. We surveyed 216 Australians (70% female) to assess their perceptions of sex and labor trafficking and actions to reduce them. Results demonstrated that women reported greater personal distress (but not empathy) for victims than men, which was associated with greater willingness to take action. Women also perceived available actions to be more efficacious than men, which predicted willingness, while perceived cost of actions did not. Implications for promoting social action to reduce human trafficking are discussed.

The United Nations (UN, 2004) defines human trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion . . . for the purpose of exploitation” (p. 4). It is a transnational and organized commodity where the exploitation of human beings can take on many different forms (UNODC, 2008). In this article, we focus specifically on human trafficking in the form of sexual exploitation (HTSE) and in the form of forced labor (HTFL). The former refers to the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of an individual for a commercial sex act; that is, any sex act for which anything of value is given to, or received, by another person (Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, 2000). In contrast, HTFL is referred to as involuntary work or service that is enacted under menace of penalty. According to the International Labor Office (ILO, 2005), this does not include situations involving low wages or poor working conditions; rather it is a severe violation to one’s rights and restriction of freedom. While violating the human rights of those involved, human trafficking continues as a global trend due to corrupt governments, organized crime, enormous profitability, and the increasing number of poverty stricken and vulnerable countries (Mameli, 2002).

There are numerous initiatives currently being put into place to combat human trafficking (e.g., Anti-Slavery Project, 2010; ILO, 2012; UNODC, 2008, 2009). Yet, their focus is often at a government and policy level, not at an individual or community level, where attitudes toward the issue and

actions can be measured. As Snyder and Omoto (2007) have argued, as well as being social phenomena that can be studied at the collective and community level, social actions required to solve problems facing society can also be considered to be individual phenomena “in that they involve the actions of individuals, reflecting their individual concerns, their personal values, their own motives, and their particular goals” (p. 941). From this perspective, it becomes important to understand and to assess how individuals think and feel about the various behaviors that can be undertaken to combat human trafficking, as a way of identifying how both individual and collective social actions might be promoted. Moreover, research into human trafficking from a psychological perspective is scarce (Putt, 2007). Therefore, in line with a recent report from the American Psychological Association (APA, 2014) highlighting a need for psychologists to help communities to become aware of and to engage with the problem, we designed the current study to investigate factors that may influence willingness to engage in community activities to combat human trafficking. However, first, we must know how people in the community currently perceive the issue and its victims.

Awareness of human trafficking

It stands to reason that people may vary in their levels of awareness of the problem of human trafficking; indeed, awareness-raising is one of the most common activities that

The authors use sources to define and limit terms for the study.

Here, the authors note a contradiction of perspective, a kind of creative disagreement that leads them to focus on the individual rather than the collective level of the issue.

The authors use the Snyder and Omoto source for support and extend the claim quoted here to shape their own project.