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Bridging the Generation Gap

Subjects: Sociology, Language Arts

Required Software: Microsoft® Excel, Microsoft® Word, Microsoft® PowerPoint®

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Teaching Guide

Summary

Students get a real life lesson in Sociology as they create a hypothesis about the attitudinal differences between generations, test their hypothesis with a survey, chart their findings, and present their answers to the class.

Objectives

To introduce students to the process of creating a hypothesis and testing its validity, familiarize students with spreadsheet fundamentals, and encourage thoughtful discussion about generational differences.

Prerequisite Skills

Knows the basics of Microsoft Word or the word processing program in Microsoft Works, how to create a basic Microsoft PowerPoint presentation including inserting clip art, and how to create a Microsoft Excel worksheet including sorting and filtering data.

Time Alloted

Approximately four weeks

How to Begin

Explain to students that in this lesson they are going to explore the differences between generations. Ask students: Is your attitude about issues in life such as politics and family values the same as somebody who is, say, age 50? Do older people and younger people think alike? On what subjects might they feel differently? Is there really such a thing as a "Generation Gap?" Tell students that they are going to find out for themselves. After developing a hypothesis that they believe reflects the differences between generations, students will design and administer a survey to test their hypothesis, and then chart their findings and present the results to their classmates.

Adaptability

For more advanced students, have them design the survey form in Microsoft Excel or Word. They'll work with the Forms toolbar to add form buttons and boxes. For help designing a form in Microsoft Excel, click the Office Assistant and type "Create a form" in the search field.

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Student Activity

Description

In this activity, you will write and administer a questionnaire that compares attitudes and opinions about certain issues, based on different variables, such as age, gender, or geographic region. You will then analyze your results using Microsoft Excel and report your findings using PowerPoint.

STEP 1 *Creating a Hypothesis*

SOFTWARE: None

WHAT TO DO: Decide how you think generations may differ in their opinion on a particular topic. Team up with a classmate and choose two topics to study. These will be called Dependent Variables because you are stating that you believe that a person's beliefs about these topics depends on their age. The Independent Variable is what causes the differences in the dependent variables. In this case, the independent variable is the generation to which the person belongs.

Choices for topics might include: politics; TV violence; movies; religion; technology; women in the military; gun control; family values; friendship; and eating habits.

Now, decide exactly how you think the dependent variables will differ for the generations. This is your hypothesis. For example, if the topic is "TV violence," the hypothesis might be: Younger people think TV violence is fun and harmless, but older people think it is dangerous and harmful. Or if the topic is "women in the military, the hypothesis might be:" The older a person is the more he or she will believe that women in the military should not be allowed in combat. Or if the topic is "friendship:" Young people tend to value friends more than family, but older people tend to value family more than friends.

STEP 2 *Creating the Survey*

SOFTWARE: Microsoft Word

WHAT TO DO: Use Word to create a survey form similar to the one at the end of this activity. With your partner, create five statements for survey participants to respond to that will accurately test your hypothesis. Statements should be designed to elicit answers like "strongly agree" or "strongly disagree."

Next, assign numerical values for different attitudes toward your statements. For example:

- 5 Strongly agree
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neutral
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly disagree

Present your survey statements to the rest of the class and see if the class can guess your hypothesis and if the statements accurately reflect the hypothesis.

STEP 3 Administering the Survey

SOFTWARE: None

WHAT TO DO: Decide on a minimum number of people to be surveyed. Set up tables in public places, such as at a mall, inside or outside a grocery store, or at a movie theater. Please note: You must have the permission of your parents and the survey site owner before administering their survey. Be sure respondents fill out the entire survey and thank them for taking the time to do so. Now, for each respondent, average the numerical values of their responses to the survey statements and write this "score" in the Key Code Average box on the survey form.

STEP 4 Analyzing the Results

SOFTWARE: Microsoft Excel

WHAT TO DO: You are now ready to analyze your survey data. First, clarify your variables. For example, independent variable: Generation; dependent variable: Political Beliefs. There should be one column for each dependent variable on your worksheet. When entering data into your worksheet, each response (completed survey) should be put in its own row and the Independent Variable should go in the first column. Even if you do not include this information in your analysis, you should at least note how many males/females there are and what part of the world the respondents were born in. These differences may affect your results, and are therefore important to record. Make these the second and third columns.

A	B	C	D	E	F
IS THERE A GENERATION GAP?					
Statement: It is wrong to allow women to fight in any military combat					
GENERATION	GENDER	ORIGIN	HOME	POLITICS	OPINON
1921-1935	F	NY	S	DEM	4
1925-1940	M	CA	S	REP	3
1936-1950	F	CA	U	REP	2
1966-1980	F	FL	S	DEM	1
1936-1950	M	GER	R	NONE	1
Before 1905	F	FL	S	DEM	5
1951-1965	M	WA	U	DEM	2
After 1980	F	FL	U	NONE	1
KEY					
	F=Female				
	M=Male		5=Strongly Agree		
	S=Suburban		4=Agree		
	U=Urban		3=Neutral		
	R=Rural		2=Disagree		
	DEM=Democrat		1=Strongly Disagree		
	REP=Republican				

Example 1: Generation Gap worksheet created in Microsoft Excel

Next, sort the data based on the generation group. Then, calculate the average score for each dependent variable for each group. Using

Microsoft Excel's filtering features, evaluate the data by showing records that match certain rules, or criteria. For example, show all records of people who were born between 1946-1955 from the United States that scored the highest for one of your dependent variables.

Finally, create charts that show some trend in your data.

STEP 5 *Presenting the Results*

SOFTWARE: Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint

WHAT TO DO: Have each team present their hypothesis and their findings to the class. Teams may present their ideas on the computer using Microsoft Excel to show their graphs. Or, each team can create a presentation in PowerPoint to demonstrate with graphics, art, animations, and graphs the hypothesis and the various findings.



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Last Updated: January 1, 1998