

Case study

Multiple ways to use datasets at the University of North Carolina



The teaching datasets in *SAGE Research Methods datasets* can save hours of valuable classroom prep time by providing real, topical data in useable formats

“Data is everywhere, but clean, accessible, organized, and well documented data is much harder to find.”

–Thomas M. Carsey, PhD,
Lecturer in Data Analysis,
University of North Carolina at
Chapel Hill

Executive summary

Thomas M. Carsey is the Director of the Odum Institute for Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Thomas J. Pearsall Distinguished Professor in the Department of Political Science where he teaches a variety of courses. He has also collaborated with SAGE in creating datasets for *SAGE Research Methods Datasets*.

Dr Carsey has identified multiple ways in which the *SAGE Research Methods Datasets* can be used to illustrate new methods during classes, and/or as the basis for homework or other out-of-class environments, such as online or distance learning.

Challenges

Finding current, manageable, real data sets to use in the classroom has traditionally been a very time-consuming task.

The data needs to be clean, accessible, and relevant to the particular method it is meant to illustrate. When professors find one data set that works they tend to use it repetitively, and the data ends up being corrupted or modified by students, sometimes lost or forgotten in a computer, and soon out of date or not particularly topical.

This data also tends to be available only during the class or stored locally, so students have limited access to it outside teaching hours.

How SAGE Research Methods Datasets helped

SAGE Research Methods Datasets includes raw data—ideal for teaching purposes—that demonstrates dozens of qualitative and quantitative methods. Each dataset is packaged with an explanation of the method that is being applied and a step-by-step guide to analyzing the data. Each dataset is also stored in multiple formats, so instructors can use their preferred software.

“I have spent hundreds of hours – maybe more – over the years looking for data sets. When you finally find one, the tendency is to keep using it over and over again. SAGE Research Methods Datasets solves these problems. The data are fresh, there is a wide diversity of topics covered by the data, and the [SAGE] team has done the hard work of finding datasets appropriate to illustrate each methods topic. It is fast, reliable, and easy to use.”

Dr Carsey uses the datasets with his students to walk them through an example in class – either by observing on a screen or following on their own equipment. The additional variables that are included in each module mean they can repeat the exercise themselves afterwards.

Datasets are also used in flipped classrooms, where students work through the materials on their own, and then bring them back to class to discuss questions and additional examples.

Distance learners also benefit from the datasets as they enable them to work through the datasets to then discuss later online, or even grade each other’s work in peer evaluation formats.

Results

Students love the variety of datasets on offer and value the time that is saved by having ready-access to clean data.

The accompanying method overviews provide them with a great reference and refresher tool, and together with the how-to guides they enable students to confidently carry out data analysis.

Undergraduates who are just touching data for the first time learn the basics through practice, and graduate students can explore specific data analysis techniques in greater depth.

“With the explosion of data science and the drive to increase the data literacy of students across all domains, resources like SAGE Research Methods Datasets are going to become increasingly essential.”

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in the United States, was the nation’s first public university. A member of the prestigious Association of American Universities, Carolina regularly ranks as the best value for academic quality in the US public higher education.

Ranked 5th best public university in *US News & World Report’s 2015 “Best Colleges”* guidebook for the 15th consecutive year.

Notable students include Nobel prize recipients Dr Aziz Sancar and Dr Oliver Smithies.

www.sageresearchmethods.com/datasets