Using the Jazz Metaphor to Enhance Student Learning and Skill Development in the Marketing Research Course

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Abstract

The marketing research course is often a very challenging one both for students and instructors. This article discusses how the jazz metaphor can aid the instructor in both facilitating students' learning of the more basic as well as the more specific skills that make up the course, in addition to contributing more to student enjoyment of the marketing research subject. Reflective, experiential learning based classroom illustrations and suggestions for jazz metaphor implementation by students and instructor are also provided.

KEY WORDS: marketing research, marketing research education, jazz, improvisation, experiential learning

Equipping today's research students to deal with the changing research requirements of today's and tomorrow's world is a goal of the marketing research course. However, even visualizing the necessary changes in marketing research discussed by Smith (2006) and others, much less being conversant with them, is often not easy—for either marketing research instructors or their students. To this end, this article first outlines the challenges and opportunities inherent in the marketing research course --traditionally a very challenging one for both students and instructors--and then discusses how the use of metaphor and reflective experiential learning as educational tools in the marketing research course may be very useful.

Marketing Research Course Challenges and Opportunities

The goal of the marketing research course is to provide needed skills, critical thinking, and processes to students who desire to work either within the research field or as managers and users of research information. Either way, students need to understand the nature of the industry and the strategies and methods that are available to conduct a study, as well as the intricacies of research, criteria for research evaluation, and the use of information in decision-making (Stern and Tseng, 2002). However, as Pelton and True (2004), Lincoln (2008) and others note if we are to effectively educate this generation of students we must adopt teaching tools to their needs and expectations

The marketing research course serves up many challenges for both students and instructors (c.f. Stern and Tseng, 2002; Giacobbe and Segal, 1994; Segal 1987). For example, a great deal of previous literature has highlighted a number of attitude and skills gaps that can seriously impact the effectiveness of an academic program in meeting the needs of marketing research students. Over forty years ago, for example, Miller (1967) noted substantial differences between the attitudes of professors of marketing and marketing research and those of practitioners on the kind of training necessary to prepare students for marketing research careers, and subsequent research (c.f. Giacobbe and Segal, 1994; Nonis and Hudson, 1999;Tanner, 1999; Achenreiner, 2001) has addressed this issue. An American Marketing Association Taskforce (1988) also took up this theme and pointed out that the "chasm" between marketing research academician and practitioner must be addressed.

More recent research by Giacobbe and Segal (1994) also demonstrated marketing "research skills gaps" that exist between the skills marketing research educators believe students need and those they believe a conventional M.B.A. program provides. Specifically, marketing research educators only "somewhat agreed" that the top three rated skills (Computer Skills, Quantitative and Statistical Skills, and Report Writing Skills) were even provided by MBA programs, with much lower performance ratings given to other key skills identified (Verbal Communication Skills, Ability to Analyze and Interpret Research Results, Oral Presentation Skills, Written Communications Skills, Ability to Creatively Conceptualize Marketing Research Problems, Questionnaire Design Skills, and Ability to Design Marketing Research Projects).

A key difficulty facing the marketing research instructor is that there are a vast number of topics that could and perhaps should be covered in a marketing research course. Many of the decisions instructors need to make center on how much time to allocate to (1) basic skills like writing skills, oral communication skills, and software usage skills, (2) statistical skills, (3) qualitative as opposed to quantitative skills (4) increasingly important topics such as global research, focus group trends, internet research, blogs, database marketing and ethical research issues, as opposed to functional research design issues or experimental design issues, and (6) lifelong learning skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making skills (Achenreiner,2001;Celuch and Slama,1998;Chonko, and Roberts 1996; Close, Dixit, and Maholtra 2005; Dobni and Links, 2008).

As Achenreiner (2001, p.15) notes "a difficulty faced in planning the course is deciding what topics to cover and how much time to allocate to each." Over the years these decisions have become increasingly difficult. As the gap between student performance and faculty expectation continues to widen (Tanner, 1999), there is a pressing need to cover more rudimentary skills that should be, and are being addressed in other courses, but where students continuously seem to be weak, such as formal report writing, technical writing skills, presentation skills, more sophisticated use of software, not to mention grammar and the importance of proof-reading." Nonis and Hudson (1999), however, suggest some students never appreciate marketing research as a decision-making tool because too much time gets spent covering techniques and mechanics. Thus the instructor faces content challenges in terms of not only specific techniques and the coverage to devote to them, but of how to address some of the previously identified gaps in marketing research education.

A growing amount of literature also suggests that marketing research as a profession needs to make some changes (c.f.; Chadwick 2006; Dolan and Ayland 2001; Garcia-Gonzalez, 2006; Gordon 2006; Keegan 2007; McDonald 2008) that may necessitate changes by the marketing research instructor in both the approach and content of the marketing research course. Perhaps most important is the call for the profession to get closer to managerial decision-making, to become more flexible, more active participants in decision-making, and to practice a more holistic * approach to research and interpretation (Smith, 2006). In a similar vein Piercy (2006) has noted that "marketing researchers continue to enshrine their own irrelevance with an obsession with technique and methodology." Clearly in at least Piercy's (2006) view, though seemingly in tune with the comments of Nonis and Hudson (1999) and others in the ongoing discourse, marketing researchers (and perhaps marketing research instructors) do not necessarily see the way forward.

There is also growing disenchantment with business schools by research practitioners, with many companies setting up their own in-house training programs rather than utilizing the education provided by Universities (Walle, 1991), and, with the current rate of technological, political and social change, there is an outcry for lifelong learning skills within the curriculum, as opposed to reciting marketing concepts and facts (Celuch and Slama 1998). The marketing research industry feels business schools need to develop student's

communication skills, computer usage skills, along with problem-solving and decision-making skills (Chonko and Roberts, 1996;Kimball,1996;Lamb, Shipp, and Moncrief 1995; McGorry 2006).

Lastly, today's marketing research course must deal with the increasing challenges and needs of a demanding new generation of students. Today's instructors are finding that their "tried and true" teaching methods are no longer effectively teaching today's students (Lincoln, 2008).
* The term "holistic" refers to the school of analysis that (a) attempts to integrate qualitative and quantitative research evidence, (b) makes explicit to management prior knowledge and intuition, and attempts to factor this into the interpretation process, (c) works with a range of analytical concepts that reflect the imperfection of many of the (multiple) information sources market researchers now use, and (d) helps users of the data make more informed, evidence-based decisions."(Smith, D.V. L. and Fletcher, J.H. 2004).

As Matulich, Papp, and Haytko (2008, p. 1) note, "the new learning environment for this Net Generation should be active , collaborative, experiential, team-based, and as self paced as possible (Close, Dixit, and Maholtra,2005; Oblinger,2005;Twenge,2006), and (2008, p.2) "class time is most effective for these students when it involves interactions, demonstration, and social networking. NetGen students are visual and kinesthetic learners who prefer to experience the world through multimedia and not print." Lincoln (2008), Pelton and True (2004), and others note that if we are to effectively educate this generation of students we must adopt our teaching tools to their needs and expectations

The marketing profession, those of us in marketing education, and most specifically those of us that teach the marketing research course, are thus faced with key questions of the mismatch between the structure of the typical marketing research course and the needs, demands and skills required of students and managers in today's fast changing world. Increasingly, the depth and breadth of strategic change that companies must undertake to survive is significant (Hammer& Champy, 1993), and managers often find themselves in decision-making situations that transcend their functional areas of expertise and challenge their comfort zones. As Smith (2006,p.5) points out today's fast changing world requires research managers to "draw on multiple sources of (often) imperfect evidence; go beyond the 'literal' consumer survey evidence; make various creative interventions to provide fresh insights and new perspective; and also weave customer knowledge together with other types of market, financial and organisational information." In short, research managers are being called upon to improvise and creatively weave through more complex information in a way that benefits decision-making and the profession, and the marketing research course must go beyond the more traditional curriculum approaches to deal with this changing world. Our marketing research students' educational training must be reflective of these new requirements, with new approaches to pedagogy being called for.

However, seeing the way through these challenges can prove difficult for the marketing research instructor and students. In this regard the use of metaphor may be helpful. Further,

<u>applying the metaphor through an experiential learning approach</u>, as described below can facilitate student learning and enjoyment within the marketing research classroom.

The Jazz Metaphor, Experiential Learning, and Marketing Research Education

This article advances the discussion thread in the literature on the need for change in the marketing research milieu, and specifically in the area of marketing research education, though using the metaphor of jazz music making/improvisation. Based on a twenty year career in marketing research (divided between industry and academia), as well as his professional jazz experience, the author believes that jazz is a very useful metaphor for the teaching of marketing research. Like with the jazz idiom, linearity and unbounded predictability are not currently appropriate in research given current fast changing conditions. Rather, what <u>is</u> required is more creativity, flexibility, new methods of application, and the like (e.g. McCorkle et al, 2007). Further, identified skills gaps such as oral and written communications, and so on suggest that traditional marketing research classroom methods may need the addition of new pedagogical modalities to address them (e.g. Lincoln,2008). To this end the jazz metaphor and an experiential learning approach can be very useful.

As noted by Nachmanovitch (1990, p.17), "We are all improvisers. Every conversation is a form of jazz. The activity of instantaneous improvisation is as ordinary to us as breathing. Whether we are creating high art or a meal, we improvise when we move with the flow of time and with our own evolving consciousness, rather than with a prescribed script or recipe."

The Nachmanovitch quote above equally applies to the conduct of marketing research, and is certainly applicable and directionally helpful to the needs of the new marketing research classroom. Those of us in marketing research know that, given today's fast changing world, we are increasingly being "put on the spot" to rethink and make adjustments "on the fly" to better meet the needs of decision-makers. The point of this article is that the Jazz metaphor can be useful in moving marketing research education in the required directions.

Metaphors in Business and Business Education

Metaphor may be defined (The Freedictionary.com) as:

> **1.** A figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison, as in <u>*"a sea of troubles*"</u> or <u>*"All the world's a stage"*</u> *Shakespeare.*
> **2.** One thing conceived as representing another; a symbol: <u>"Hollywood has always been an irresistible, prefabricated metaphor for the crass, the materialistic, the shallow, and the craven</u>*"* Neal Gabler.

In business the use of metaphor allows us to interpret an organisation by focussing on an image (or symbol) that represents an aspect of that organisation. Indeed Morgan (1997)

suggests that metaphorical thinking permeates all types of business thought. The use of metaphor has also, of course, been shown to be a useful technique in the elicitation of respondent observations in marketing research (Barabba and Zaltman 1991; Zaltman and Higie, 1993; Zaltman and Higie 1995, Pink, 1998; Zaltman 1996; Lieber 1997).

There are, of course, many metaphors potentially on offer, of which the jazz metaphor is just one of many (albeit a good one, based on findings of previous research and the reasons outlined below) in the metaphor "bag of tricks" that marketing educators can draw upon to educate their marketing research students. This paper utilises the metaphor of jazz music making (as opposed to other metaphors) as it appears to be a sound approach that can be successfully applied (either singularly or jointly with other metaphors) to the marketing research classroom for a number of reasons:

1. First, when seeking a metaphor, we are aiming for a mechanism which is easily understandable, translates well, is not contextually or culturally constrained, and that therefore can successfully aid student visualisation and action. As a universal language, music transcends cultures, languages, and other differences and contexts quite successfully, and this lends to the jazz metaphor's appeal for use in today's more globally populated classrooms (as opposed to metaphors based, for example, on sporting, business or other contextually based images).

2. Music as a metaphor, particularly the interactive nature of jazz, also seems to measure well against the needs of NetGen students for multimedia learning, interaction, spontaneity, demonstration, and social networking (Matulich, Papp,and Haytko,2008), as will be discussed more fully below.

3. Further, the kinds of changes in the marketing research profession pointed to by Smith (2006), Smith and Fletcher (2004), Dolan and Ayland (2001), Chadwick (2006), Garcia-Gonzalez (2006), Gordon (2006), Keegan (2007), McDonald (2008) and others strongly suggest that marketing researchers will need to become more conversant with improvisation, and creativity. The notion of improvisation and creativity as seen in music is very well known --for example Nachmanovitch has noted (1990, p.17) "when we think improvisation, we tend to think first of improvised music," and this characteristic adds to the potentially greater impact of the jazz metaphor as a tool to aid student visualisation compared to other potential metaphorical options.

4. Fourth, there is a successful history and a growing body of literature on the application of the jazz metaphor to business. For example, jazz has been identified as an important metaphor in theory development for organisational studies (Kamoche et al. 2003), and has also been seen in a range of management literature dealing with strategic fit (Neilsen, 1992),organisational development (Lewin, 1998), new product development (Moorman and Miner, 1998; Kamoche and Cunha, 2001),leadership (Newton, 2004) and organisational networks, (Pavlovich, 2003). The metaphor, however, has to date

only *very* limited attention in the general marketing literature, (Dennis and Macaulay 2007) and has *not* been applied to the marketing research discipline.

5. In addition to its use in helping the transfer of knowledge in business, the use of metaphor, including musical metaphors, has been successfully used in the business classroom across a variety of disciplines as mechanism for building creativity and enlightening learning in terms of organisational theory (e.g. Oswick, Keenoy, and Grant, 2002), strategic management (Weick, 2003), general management (Moshavi,2001),and marketing management (Weinrauch,2005).

6. Sixth, the jazz metaphor specifically has been applied to management education in the area of leadership (Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall, 1999, as well as economics (Tinari and Khandke, 2002), but has not been applied to the marketing research classroom.

7. Seventh, the jazz metaphor lends itself well to reflective experiential learning applications, which have proven quite successful with today's new generation of students in the classroom. Sojka and Fish (2008, pg. 1) note that "experiential learning has been linked with a host of benefits including increased student enthusiasm (Dabbour, 1997), increased performance on assignments,(Perry et al., 1996), higher levels of self-confidence (Anderman and Young,1994; Ramocki,1987),enhancement of learning (Hamer, 2000;Lawson, 1995),enhancement of creativity and social skills (Livingson and Lynch,2002), and improvement in critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Abson,1994;Gremler et al. 2000; Zoller,1987).

For the reasons just detailed, and building on the successful applications of the jazz metaphor above, this paper advances the discussion in the literature using the metaphor of jazz music making/improvisation as applied to the teaching of the marketing research course.

All forms of jazz require a degree of structure, improvisation around that structure, cooperation, and common goals of performance. More specifically, the author contends that within the improvisational jazz medium skillful performance requires full knowledge of (1) the context, (2) techniques, options, and creative application of those techniques, (3) virtuosity and artistry, (4) creative listening to work with others in the group, (5) leadership (in whole or part), (6) confidence, and (7) a successful jazz performance also relies on collaboration.

By applying these elements within the marketing research classroom, especially when done via an experiential learning approach, we can suggest a "success" framework that can provide additional insight and application of marketing research techniques and issues to the classroom, as well as one that can hopefully provide reflective additional insight for moving forward in improving the relevance of marketing research to organisational decision-making. We can also add an element of fun and creativity to what is often a challenging course for students.

Specifically, the author believes the jazz metaphor and the "success framework" can help facilitate the following pedagogical aims and benefits to instructors as applied within the marketing research course:

1. The jazz metaphor can serve as a pedagogical focal point for the need of the marketing research profession to get closer to managerial decision-making, to become more flexible, more active participants in decision-making, and to practice a more holistic approach to research and interpretation (Smith, 2006).
2. It can help to reinforce the need for students to master a variety of research techniques and the ability to use them appropriately and more holistically.
3. It can help instructors to aid students' understanding of the importance of context in research and decision-making.
4. It can aid instructors to foster students' appreciation of active, creative listening throughout the research process, but particularly as regards the requirements of decision-makers.
5. It can help the instructor introduce the importance of leadership among researchers.
6. It can help instructors' illustrate and hopefully foster a desire on the part of our students to aim for an "effortless mastery" of our craft.
7. It can help the instructor reinforce that today's research requirements suggest the use of "right brain" creative enablers, more "eclectic" approaches, and more "circular" rather than linear problem solving process.

Jazz Metaphor Integration and Implementation Considerations

Before incorporating the jazz metaphor and the associated success framework I have introduced above into a class, the marketing research instructor must decide to what extent the class topics and the metaphor, and its related concept of improvisation, can be integrated, as well as in what manner and degree. For example, as noted in Aylesworth (2008), Huffaker and West (2005) describe a class entitled "The Power of Soul and Spirit in Business" in which improvisational techniques and philosophy are an integral part of the goals and learning objectives of the course. Their expressed goal in this class was to create "an experience that reinforced course themes and used experiential learning to get at their essence" (p. 853). To accomplish this goal they used a series of improvisational exercises that supported these themes and underlined their importance.

However, given the topical constraints already mentioned that challenge the marketing research course, the jazz metaphor and its associated notion of improvisation, need not be a wholly integral component of the marketing research class for the improvisational jazz mind-set to be helpful to the study of marketing research, and to acquainting marketing research students with the need for more holistic (Smith 2006) marketing research approaches. Further, incorporating selective elements of the jazz framework into the classroom need not take much class time to be impactful. For example, in my experience it takes no longer than 15 minutes

of class time to introduce the jazz metaphor and to outline its potential value to research students (as described below under Experiential Learning Activity 1).

Numerous individual concepts and examples from the framework above can be introduced into class and <u>briefly</u> explained, along with the discussion of the jazz metaphor applied to research. By positively reinforcing their use instructors can enhance both the nature of the class as well as student creativity and student learning of the relationship between marketing research and decision-making. Additionally the marketing research instructor can use such elements of the jazz success framework as creative listening, to address some of the noted rudimentary (Tanner, 1999) skills gaps that have been identified in the marketing research course that are not seemingly addressed by traditional teaching methods!

A further element for instructors to consider in terms of whether and how to implement the jazz metaphor into their course is that establishing the jazz metaphor and its improvisational mind-set puts some of the control of the class in the students' hands. Jazz great Miles Davis believed that musicians in his band were good enough to meet the demands of a challenging task, and he allowed them to improvise knowing that they had the capacity to perform well (Barrett,1998). Similarly, for the jazz metaphor to be most effective in the marketing research course, the lecturer must believe that students are capable and have the potential to develop more improvisational skills and methods in marketing research (c.f. Titus, 2007). Marketing research instructors will note that this student self-direction and responsibility for more active learning may go a long way to meeting the needs of the NetGen student!

In my experience students are quite capable in this regard. I have found the jazz metaphor is an excellent facilitator of student learning of marketing research techniques, applications and other key course content, helps reinforce the need for more holistic research in today's world, as well as contributes to student enjoyment and classroom climate. Importantly, students don't have to have previous jazz knowledge to benefit from the metaphor. I ascertain their previous jazz knowledge on the first day of the course, and compare this anecdotally against the formal course feedback.

Differing student needs and learning styles, of course, are why we use multiple techniques in the classroom. Instructors will need to consider their own class composition, and determine the appropriateness of the jazz metaphor, and the degree to which they feel comfortable in introducing and integrating it into the marketing research course. As general guidelines for doing so, my own experience suggests the following

1. <u>The jazz metaphor is an easy one for students to understand and relate to</u>.

2. <u>The jazz metaphor benefits from reinforcement. It is my aim through classroom discussion, tutorial activities, and so on to facilitate student learning of both research and the metaphor. I suggest to students that they be aware and take advantage of all classroom opportunities, contexts and scope for improvisation, as well as cooperation—and for doing things differently.</u>

3. The jazz metaphor and improvisational thinking require practice. While full integration of the jazz metaphor into the class is not required, as an instructor I aim to foster classroom activities to provide opportunities, and time for practice of those jazz framework items that I do introduce into the classroom. With practice I have found student application improves significantly.

4. I suggest to instructors that for most effective use of the jazz metaphor they encourage a classroom climate of cooperation, fun and acceptance of the new.
I think it is important that instructors encourage humour, play and fun. Anecdotally I believe student learning in the marketing research course, traditionally a challenging one for many students, is facilitated by the above elements.

Introducing and Implementing the Jazz Metaphor

After introducing the course, outline of topics, assessment requirements and so on, I typically "set the stage" for the introduction of the jazz metaphor by over-viewing the discussion in the literature on the assigned articles by Smith (2006), Chadwick (2006), Garcia-Gonzalez (2006), and others cited at the beginning of this article, on the need for change and a more holistic approach to marketing research which will both aid business decision-making and take the marketing research profession in the required directions for success in today's fast changing business climate, and ask for student comments, suggested solutions and so on.

 Experiential Classroom Activity Illustration 1: Jazz and Research Role Play, Reflection/Discussion/The Jazz and Research Course Handout: Approx. Time Allocated 15-20 minutes including unpacking and reflection.

I then ask for student consideration of a metaphor that I feel may be useful in guiding our learning of marketing research along the required paths. To introduce the jazz metaphor I ask my marketing research students to *briefly* role-play (c.f. Sojka and Fish, 2008 on the successful use of in-class role plays to meet the needs of NetGen students), imagining they were in an improvising band. I ask the class to divide into groups of five, where each student is assigned an instrument (e.g. guitar, bass, piano, drums etc.) and after a very brief "rehearsal" the "band" is asked to "play" and improvise for the class an easy jazz tune I provide. I also encourage the students to have some fun at this time (author's comment: students usually are quite enthusiastic when given the opportunity to perform, and the results are entertaining, to say the least).   Students are then asked to define the characteristics and elements that they would need to consider for any given successful future performance. The "unpacking" of these elements leads to a reflective discussion of the similarities of skills required of an improvising jazz group to the elements of the marketing research process, and the framework above, its relationship to decision-making, and its value to the course. The similarities are shown visually on a white board as they are developed, and the jazz metaphor and the framework above receive some further elaboration, and are then used integrally

throughout the course in discussion, in application exercises, role plays, and other course elements, as discussed below.

Generally what transpires on the white board is similar to that shown below:

Jazz Improvisation Skills	Marketing Research Skills
Good technical skills required	Good technical skills required
Being on top of the situation as it changes, being able to improvise at will	Being aware of opportunities and having flexibility of methods and approaches to suit
Creativity	Creativity
Must consider what other players are doing and thinking, audience reactions etc.	Aware of and ability to work within contextual constraints
Good listening and cooperation	Good listening and facilitation skills with decision-makers

More specifically, the author contends that within the improvisational jazz medium skillful performance requires full knowledge of (1) the context, (2) techniques, options, and creative application of those techniques, (3) virtuosity and artistry, (4) creative listening to work with others in the group, (5) leadership (in whole or part), (6) confidence, and (7) also relies on collaboration.

I reinforce to my students that these same skills have parallels in the successful conduct of marketing research throughout the marketing research process—the topics and processes around which the course is organised.
One way I do this is through a lengthy handout and other materials I pass out at this early point in the course which help to reinforce the potential value of the possibility of using the jazz metaphor to re-think and re-frame at given stages of the research process.**

**Further information on course materials is available from the author.

I also pass out at this time the list of jazz reference materials in Appendix One, to which interested students may refer throughout the term. (Author's note: interested marketing research instructors seeking to enhance their knowledge of jazz looking for classroom examples or materials may also wish to peruse these references).

I use the jazz metaphor and the success framework I have introduced throughout the course as applied to the marketing research process via a number of experiential in-class activities. The following discussion and the experiential classroom learning illustrations are examples of my personal teaching method as we progress through the course topics, and may not suit all instructors.

Problem Formulation: Knowing the Form, Players, the Audience and Context

In reinforcing the jazz metaphor and the framework for successful performance to my marketing research students we first discuss how jazz musicians must understand a number of aspects of the "jazz problem" to successfully perform their role. As per the opening "experiential exercise", jazz musicians must know how to decipher problem elements and work through such problem features as the song "form" (e.g. is the piece in waltz form, a 12 bar blues) and style, the abilities and roles of other players, as well as audience and venue characteristics. (Author's note: It is perhaps useful to point out at this stage that the time spent to discuss song form and the 12 bar blues as example forms is extremely minimal; the vast majority of students easily understand and have been exposed to these concepts. The interested instructor will note that the vast majority of rock and pop music that most students listen to every day are based on these forms).

Experiential Classroom Activity Illustration 2: Research Problem Parallels with Jazz/ Listening and Reflection: Approx. Time Allocated 10-15 minutes

While there are many examples from jazz to illustrate the notion of dealing with a problem context, I find that jazz pioneers trumpeter and composer Miles Davis and pianist and composer Dave Brubeck's art, for example, prototypically reflect around working through a particular (jazz) problem. For example, Brubeck's compositions are known for featuring atypical and difficult time signatures (meters), as well as atonality (dissonance of notes and irregular musical scales) through which the musicians must work through and which represent interesting and difficult improvisational aspects, while many of Miles Davis compositions are in the form of minimalist sketches which put forth the problem of dealing with lack of much structure around which the musicians must improvise. Davis often sketched these just before he handed them to the musicians for a recording session!

To illustrate these two points I have students listen to something from Brubeck's classic "Time Out" album (for example the tune "Take Five") and from Davis's famous Kind of Blue album (note to readers: both listed in Appendix One). We then reflect on what we have just heard, and *very briefly* discuss the elements required for a successful performance of the "problems" these compositions pose for a musician.

The ensuing discussion of the parallels with research problem identification, formulation, differing perspectives from researchers and decision-makers about the appropriate approach to take, and what this means to the carry over to the next stages of the research process bring us very early in the course to the jazz success framework notions of creative listening, the increasing importance of leadership and confidence by researchers and the equally important jazz element of collaboration among players (i.e. researchers and decision-makers in organisations). We discuss for example that confidence by marketing researchers is a key element of leadership (and also something that is endemic to being a good jazz soloist). I

indicate that confidence comes through practice and application. As related by Holbrook (2009), to be an effective jazz improviser musically takes countless hours of practice of scales, keys, application of chord voicings and so on. The key point here is that for both marketing researchers and jazz musicians improvisation is not just "winging it", but requires practice and more practice, and may well require marketing researchers to move out of the "support role" that many feel most comfortable in, to becoming more active participants in problem formulation and, indeed, all following steps in the research process. Hardie's (2007) article which references the "self-flagellation" of the industry in terms of its ability to apply results and move beyond simple reporting has an answer—more practice and more involvement by researchers in working more closely with regard to decision-making.

Research Design and Method: Knowing the Organisational Context, Other Players, and their Improvisational Appropriateness

In this stage of the marketing research process, my students are introduced to the notion that marketing researchers must also know how to analyse and frame the research problem into an appropriate research design and method to be successful improvisers, and to meet the needs of decision-makers. A first important contextual determination for them to be aware of is the degree to which the organisation itself is improvisational, and how this relates to its level of market orientation (c.f. Dennis and Macaulay (2007) who posit at least four levels of organisational improvisation). Knowing the degree of improvisation and its characteristic levels within the organisation is an important guideline for researchers who must "work" the context. However, I discuss with my students that this is not enough. We discuss and apply throughout the course how analysis of an additional number of other problem formulation and research design/method contextual questions may also be helped by the jazz metaphor.

In terms of research design and methods we, for example, discuss that decision makers often see researchers as "readers" (those who can't improvise or creatively approach a problem, but use the same old approach) rather than "jazzers" (who can); researchers are viewed as data obsessed, tentative specialists, who don't have the full business perspective and who cannot visualise or communicate research designs or results which facilitate and *enable* decisions (Smith, and Fletcher, 2004). Jazz musicians apply creativity, and take appropriate chances on stage. The requirements of the new "holistic" research suggest researchers must also learn to go somewhat beyond their own comfort levels that may limit the acceptance and utilisation of research results by decision-makers. This is not to suggest that research quality is sacrificed, rather that we learn how to better deal with research designs and methods which may involve imperfect data sets, non-linear purchase journeys, and the like, if we are to meet the needs of decision-makers.

Data Analysis: Techniques, Context, and Creativity

I tell my students that jazz players must have many tools and approaches to play and improvise at will. They must have a full range of techniques to call upon, and be able to use

these in a range of keys, tempos, and styles. Jazz players must exhibit judgment and appropriate flexibility in their ability to apply these techniques appropriately to the situation. There are obvious parallels required of the successful researcher who must have a full "tool-box."

<u>Experiential Classroom Activity Illustration 3: Jazz and the Importance of Multiple Techniques, Listening/ Reflection/Discussion: Approx. Time Allocated 15 minutes</u>

Students relate very well to the story, picture (note to instructors, there are some excellent Google images of Rahsaan Roland Kirk playing three instruments at once that are extremely effective for classroom use!!) and music of Multi-instrumentalist Rahsaan Roland Kirk, who I use (among others) to illustrate the notion of technique.

Kirk regularly played three instruments at once; he did this not as a stunt or novelty act, but as a perfectly serious way of making music. Some commentators suggest that, being blind, Kirk, could not see how impossible this looked. Gelly (2000, pg. 107) notes that "Rahsaan Roland Kirk's arrival on stage, festooned by instruments, was quite alarming. On straps around his neck were three saxophones with a flute planted in the bell of one of them. Also attached to his person were a siren whistle and a nose flute; he often carried a clarinet, too. For some years he also brought with him a bag of plastic toy flutes, which he would pass out to the audience, instructing them to join in at certain points.

A Rahsaan Roland Kirk performance was an unforgettable experience, with no two sets ever quite the same. He would roar through an opening riff on the three saxes, let go of two, and produce a blistering solo on the remaining one, topped off with a blast on the siren. Then he might produce the flute, and launch another of his specialities, a voiced flute solo—playing and singing at the same time. He also was a master of circular breathing—the technique of blowing out air while, at the same time, breathing in. This allowed him to play for minutes on end without pausing for breath. At the age of 39, Kirk suffered a stroke that totally paralysed his right side. He redesigned the tenor saxophone keywork, devised and mastered a whole new technique, and went back on the road successfully for the last year of his life. "

In going through this example, I will play something of Kirk's music which illustrates one or another of these techniques (for example, Kirk's playing of "Ain't No Sunshine When She's Gone"--which illustrates the voiced flute solo and simultaneously multi-instrumental playing—interested Instructors please see Appendix One for reference).

I use this example to discuss with my research students that, metaphorically, researchers should also have a wide range of tools and techniques, qualitative and quantitative. Having a 'deep toolbox', and the knowledge of how to use those tools, would seem to a key requirement for success in the changing research environment (which I tell students is why we study both a wide number and different types of research techniques in the course!).

Experiential Classroom Activity Illustration 4: Debate--Research Techniques (and Marketing Research) as Art Vs. Science/ Debate/Reflection/Discussion: Approx. Time Allocated 20-25 Minutes.

In using this Experiential activity, I have first assigned to students as required reading the classic Eisner (1985) and Brown (1996) articles on marketing and marketing research as art versus science. The Brown (1996) article includes a poem by Stevens (1995) which I put up on the visualiser as a facilitator for the debate activity, also bringing in the comparison to the jazz art.

Debate

I then divide the class into groups for a debate, with student groups required to take a debate position as to whether marketing research is art, or whether it is a science.

The debate itself, and the ensuing reflection and discussion of the implications and directions provided by the Eisner (1995), Brown (1996), and the Stevens (1995) poem by students is usually quite vigorous. The point that I emphasise, of course, is the central one from the poem—that the research techniques we will learn are means not end-- that the requirements of a more holistic research approach mean that we as researchers must become more conversant with the needs of decision-makers in regards to our use of techniques and research outputs.

Experiential Classroom Activity Illustration 5: Group Discussion: What makes for Jazz Virtuosity/Artistry?: What makes for Marketing Researcher Virtuosity/Artistry? Approximate Time Allocated: 15minutes for Student Discussion, Reflection and Instructor reinforcement.

Student discussion around the two concepts of virtuosity and artistry (which students must first define), is usually very interesting. I again use the whiteboard to capture key elements from the discussion. Virtuosity implies technique(s) to burn, while artistry is the constant search for betterment in the art. The key point from the discussion activity is that Jazz musicians who are more than capable display both virtuosity and artistry (e.g. Werner,1996), as should marketing researchers.

Students are challenged at this point, and indeed, throughout the course, to think about what the jazz metaphor and the new research requirements (e. g. from Smith's 2005 article) suggest in the way of potential new research techniques? I often use the following to facilitate student thinking and discussion:

Experiential Classroom Activity Illustration 6: Brainstorming: Jazz and the Search for New Techniques/What Might New Research Techniques be Like? Listening/ Reflection/Discussion: Approx. Time Allocated 15 Minutes.

I feel there is perhaps no better illustration of the search for new techniques than that of jazz innovator Miles Davis. Many students have heard of Miles, and relate very well to his story, picture, and the changes in his music, though they may initially only be aware, if at all, of a given period of Miles long musical life.

Miles was always at the forefront of the changing jazz environment. From being a member of Charlie Parker's bebop quartet of the 1940's, through his nine-piece Birth of the Cool band in 1948-49, through the famous quintet of the 1950's (featuring John Coltrane), the revolutionary Kind of Blue album (1959),the monumental recordings accompanied by Gil Evans's 20 piece orchestra, the pioneering second quintet of the 1960's (with Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter—themselves excellent examples of continuing jazz innovation),to the jazz-fusion of the 1970's and the outright funk of his last years, Miles was at the forefront. Once others grasped the elements of his new style, Miles changed musical direction.

In discussing Miles Davis I will typically play briefly something from several of these periods—for example, from the 1948 "The Complete Birth of the Cool" album, from the "Kind of Blue Album" (e.g. the tune "So What"), and then as time allows perhaps from the "funk" style "Tutu" album (references appear in Appendix One). Even those students who describe themselves as non-musical can appreciate Miles' search for new methods and techniques.

I discuss with my students that jazz is a continuously evolving idiom, and jazz musicians are constantly seeking to improve and revise existing techniques (as illustrated by Miles), and move towards the new. Further, a more holistic approach to marketing research suggests the need for a thorough understanding of existing techniques as they apply both to the mainstream and "at the edges", to allow for improvisation. The metaphor also suggests the need for both extensions and/or more creative use of existing techniques, as well as a search for the new.

Brainstorm Activity:

At this point in the discussion I then ask the students to brainstorm about what new types of techniques might be required or suggested by our changing research environment. Our discussion will inevitably point out that technological developments may help speed the development of techniques both more responsive to the market and improvisationally useful, if we are but confident enough to utilise them appropriately (e.g. new developments in online qual, bulletin boards, use of internet "blogs", joint "hybrid" qual-quant). However, I am careful to explain that technology itself is only one avenue for potential new research techniques, and it may be that as equally promising applications, perhaps many of them qualitative, can come from creative fusion of existing techniques in previously untried ways (c.f. Mills et al 2005).

Presentation of Research Conclusions/Results

Presentation of research results and implications is a critical element of the marketing research process. It is also an area where many marketing researchers (metaphorically) "perform" rather poorly. The following reflects an activity I have had good success with in the course:

<u>Experiential Classroom Activity Illustration 7: Group Activity—What Makes for a Good Presentation? Discussion/Reflection/: Approx. Time Allocated 15 Minutes</u>.

In this activity I divide the class into small groups with the assignment of listing as best they can the characteristics that make for a BAD presentation of any sort. In the 5 minutes allocated they easily come up with a list of factors (e.g. boring, not knowing material, monotonic delivery, fails to engage audience). I then ask these same groups, based on our application of the jazz metaphor throughout the class so far, to discuss and report on how a "jazzer" might approach the presentation to make it more interesting. I list these elements on the white board as they come up (students will usually be now be comfortable with applying the jazz metaphor, and will suggest things such as use several techniques, be creative, push the limits a bit, and so on).

I ask students to discuss in class the parallels that might exist between the successful presentation of research results, and a good jazz solo. I show these on the white board as they develop from the discussion. A good jazz solo will tell a story, will engage and involve the audience, work well with the dynamics of the group, will feature creativity and occasional surprises in its improvisational development, and will lead to a natural climax that may suggest new directions for the next soloist or chorus.

Applying this to the research presentation setting, we then discuss that to engage and involve the decision-making audience, we must avoid what Smith and Fletcher (2004, p. 187) note as "the limitations of the 'old' marketing research building block approach to presentations," which include a rather laborious reportage of the findings, and the fact this approach involves a big leap for decision-makers from the findings to the eventual decision. This does neither engage decision-makers nor facilitate the decision. Instead we need to aim to tell a story that quickly engages (perhaps starting from the end results), weaving rich consumer insights to capture attention, and which will facilitate quicker decisions.

Research Evaluation

What might the jazz metaphor suggest in terms of research (and researcher) evaluation/mastery? Evaluation of a jazz performance is a function of the various elements we have previously discussed, i.e. the coming together of context, techniques and their application, artistry and virtuosity, collaboration and fusion of the group, and so on in the quest of the performance objectives.

For this activity I first divide students into small groups. They are to discuss among themselves and list out what they feel the success framework and the jazz metaphor suggest in terms of research evaluation. As part of our discussion in this area, my students and I discuss how a research study, like a jazz performance, can be evaluated in terms of the contextual elements within which it operates.

We discuss how the application of the jazz metaphor to research suggests several contextual evaluation criteria: To what degree does the research study match up to strategic criteria? Does it suggest strategic investment, contribute to functional area strategies, offer potential for substantial competitive advantage, provide evidence of market needs and potential key success factors? Is it true to the "form"? How well does the research facilitate decisions within the context? Does it provide direction? Is it timely? How well is it accepted by decision-makers and other audiences, and how appropriately applied within the context?

For the second part of this exercise student groups then work through what the jazz metaphor might suggest for the evaluation of individual researchers. Our discussion suggests performance evaluation criteria that can be applied to each of us as individual researchers-- including our level of confidence, our ability to have a full range of techniques, and to creatively apply these, are we constantly looking for better answers, and new ways of designing and conducting impactful research that aids decision-making? Do we at least occasionally exercise a leadership role in the context of business decisions? Are we forthcoming and forthright about the limitations and appropriate applications of the selected research techniques? How well have we collaborated with decision-makers?

I suggest to students that the above evaluation elements are crucial to our moving ahead as researchers and as a marketing research profession.

Student Evaluation of the Course and Jazz Metaphor

I obtain anonymous feedback about the jazz metaphor element of my course and its impact on student enjoyment and learning through a set of additional questions inserted into the course evaluation form. Student response has been overwhelmingly positive, as shown by some of the following comments:

- "This is my second time through this course (author's note: student had taken the Marketing Research Course in a prior term from another instructor). It's a lot more fun than the first time. I like the jazz metaphor, and I am much more interested in the subject."

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- "All my friends really hated their marketing research course, but this lecturer's use of the jazz thing has really made this course fun; I've learned a lot, too."

- "At the beginning I was a bit put off when this guy started off talking about and playing jazz in a marketing research course. I mean, what planet was he from? But his method gradually won me over. Now I use jazz thinking in a lot of my courses, and for other things as well."

- "I was dreading taking this course—numbers, numbers, more numbers, and my friends hated their other instructors. But this lecturer made it fun. I enjoyed the jazz metaphor, and the lecturer used it to show us research could be creative, how the numbers fit into the broader context of decision-making. It really made me think, and I think the practice we had at improvising was good preparation for the real world."

- "As we started applying the jazz metaphor some of our discussions got really good—we started feeding off each other, and got more creative about how we could approach research, try different methods, and focus on the real issues. Very enjoyable and good learning! There's really a lot more to it than I would have imagined."

- "I rated my previous marketing research instructor and course both pretty low. Both were boring, difficult to grasp, and I really hated both. The jazz metaphor and the instructor's enthusiasm for the marketing research process made all the difference this time. I passed and I enjoyed the course!"

Of course, not every student is, or will be, totally on board. In general, less than positive responses have reflected the "different" nature of the pedagogy (e.g. Anderson, 2006)—with some students indicating that they found it difficult to relax into the more flowing nature of the metaphor and the notion of improvisation. Others have indicated they felt they were not creative, and wanted a more traditional, passive (my comment) approach (e.g. formal lectures and tutorials without the need to put oneself "out there" in active discussion). Importantly, while a minority of Weinrauch's (2005) students expressed some concern that time devoted to musical metaphors in his course may have taken away from other topics (although Weinrauch did not utilise the *jazz metaphor*), in using the jazz metaphor some eight times in the marketing research course, I have not any student comments to this effect. While it is not the direct objective of this article to compare the jazz metaphor against other potential metaphors, or the methods of other instructors, the author will note that his own course evaluations have substantially improved for the marketing research course over the time in which the jazz metaphor was utilised as opposed to not utilised.

Conclusion

The article has discussed how the metaphor of jazz music making as experientially applied throughout the marketing research process is used to facilitate visualisation and application of

more "holistic" approaches, professionalism, strategic thinking, creativity, as well as fun, in the marketing research course. More specifically it has put forth the notion that for researchers (like jazz musicians), skilful performance requires (1) full knowledge of the context, (2) mastery of a number of techniques, options, and appropriate creative application of those techniques, (3) virtuosity and artistry, (4) creative listening to work with others in the group, (5) leadership (in whole or part), (6) confidence, and (7) collaboration, and has shown how experiential in-class activities using these elements are successfully woven throughout discussion of the research process.

For marketing research instructors and students the application of the jazz metaphor discussed in this article suggests a number of ways of acting "differently" in the context of "performing" our craft (and in conducting our course). The use of the jazz metaphor applied to the research process suggests a movement away from more traditional "scientific" and non-holistic forms of research to more "holistic" (Smith, 2006), participative, and "artistic" elements.

The jazz metaphor provides training directions and examples that can aid us in the quest for effective mechanisms for facilitating student learning of the marketing research subject along these directions. Operationally, the author's experience is that this is a very easy metaphor for students to translate and understand, and that they indicate it really does facilitate their learning and their enjoyment of the marketing research subject.

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