

TEACHING/LEARNING MATTERS

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Chair's Corner



Jay Howard
Professor

Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Acting Dean, College of Communications

Frequently I am reminded of how far ahead of most other disciplines sociology is in valuing teaching and learning. Both within the American Sociological Association and in many regional sociology associations, our discipline has long sought to make teaching and learning a priority. During our annual meetings, there are sessions designed to help us be better teachers and sessions on the scholarship of teaching and learning. There are sessions dedicated to faculty professional development and the assessment of student learning in sociology.

In addition to *Teaching Sociology* and *Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology* (TRAILS), the ASA has published *National Standards for High School Sociology, Sociology & General Education*, and most

recently, *The Sociology Major in the Changing Landscape of Higher Education: Curriculum, Careers, and Online Learning*. As a dean who brings in program reviewers for a variety of departments I am struck by how well prepared members of the ASA's Department Resources Group (DRG) are to help departments improve their teaching and assess student-learning outcomes in comparison to reviewers in other disciplines who often lack any training for conducting program reviews. Without a doubt, sociologists have a substantial history of taking teaching and learning seriously.

One new effort to value teaching and learning at the ASA annual meeting comes in response to a recommendation of the Task Force on Community College Faculty. The task force recommended the establishment of a symposium at the annual meeting that would provide an opportunity for faculty in teaching-intensive institutions, including community colleges, to be on the program without submitting a full paper. The Section on Teaching and Learning is collaborating on the development of the 2018 Teaching Day, which will consist of four back-to-back sessions focused on teaching and learning in the discipline. Each year the Teaching Day symposium will occur on a day adjacent to our Section Day, resulting in two full days of annual meeting programming focused on teaching.

We are fortunate to be a part of a discipline that values teaching and learning and I am fortunate to be the chair of the Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology, which is full of members dedicated to maintaining this priority in our discipline. Thank you for all the ways you contribute to teaching and learning in Sociology both on your local campus and within the discipline more broadly. Your efforts make a difference!

Editor's Introduction



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We have an extraordinary set of essays from sociological scholars for you this quarter. Topics run the gamut of interest: online teaching, the #MeToo movement, to teaching in times of crisis, inmate scholars, gender and the sociological imagination, creating an egalitarian classroom, avoiding doom and gloom in the classroom...and much more. For the sake of space, I encourage you, the reader, to explore this newsletter in its entirety and learn what your colleagues are up to.

As a first-time editor of this newsletter, I want to thank all of the contributors. Your turnout was incredible! Also, Drs. Jay Howard, Andrea Hunt, and Daina Harvey for their support and guidance through the creation of this document. You are all very much appreciated.

Again, as a first-time editor, this is my first opportunity to share my perspective on teaching and learning in the discipline in sociology. Truly, I see our profession as a gift. We have a sacred duty to shape minds and steer them towards awareness of the powerful social forces play in shaping our life choices and life chances. For example, my students are often unaware of the fact that something as simple as their decision to go to college in the first place was made for them long ago. Upon reaching this realization, they can begin to question more of the choices they "made for themselves" to see who is *really* controlling their reality...and why. And, the more we can share this gift of awareness and insights into the inner and outer-workings of our social world, the better our society can be for future generations.

I hope you all enjoy the wisdom of teaching and learning contained within these pages, and I hope to see you all in Philly!

**August 2017 to August 2018
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ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

Making Our Classrooms Relevant by Integrating RPTS



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It would be impractical to discuss teaching and learning in sociology without connecting it to the broader topic of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). SoTL is a way to increase our understanding of how students learn, and what teaching practices are most effective in contributing to learning. If implemented systematically, SoTL allows instructors to build on the their own work, and the work of others to

create new and more effective strategies for increasing student learning. In this article, I provide some background on the history of SoTL within our discipline. I then discuss why SoTL is it a critical component of our pedagogical approach to teaching sociology, and how we can incorporate SoTL into the teaching of sociology through what I call *reflective practices in teaching sociology (RPTS)*.

Sociology and SoTL: an Uneasy Relationship

Paul Baker, in a 1985 study examining the first decade of articles in *Teaching Sociology*, found the methodological rigor and theoretical grounding of SoTL principles in sociology to be wholly inadequate. Baker was prompted to undertake this study because he had been perplexed about what he referred to as the “paradox of teaching sociology.” Sociologists, he argued, “make much of their claim to generate knowledge worth knowing for all kinds of human affairs – except in their own classroom.” In a 2002

article on the *Culture of Teaching Sociology*, Carla Howrey identified a series of events that shaped the place of teaching in the organizational culture of sociology and the ASA. Among them was the ASA's 1974 *Projects on Teaching Undergraduate Sociology*, arguably the most impactful of these events.

This initiative really began in the late 1960's, as several groups within the ASA had become concerned about the quality of undergraduate sociology instruction. As a result of these concerns, a specialty segment within the association – *the Section on Undergraduate Education* – was formed. Almost immediately, the members, led by Hans Mauksch, held a conference from which a clearer understanding of the serious issues facing the ASA, with regard to teaching and learning, emerged. In addition to discussions about course objectives, and curriculum development and structure, the new ASA project attempted to address “the structure and hierarchy of sociological knowledge.”

In a 2008 article in *Teaching Sociology*, Halasz and Kaufman argued that while sociology has produced a rich understanding of social processes, the pedagogical implications of this scholarship remained largely untapped. Indeed, they argued that, in line with Mills' concept of the sociological imagination, all sociological knowledge could be mined for its pedagogical influence. Put another way, by viewing the classroom as a social space, our discipline can explore sociological themes with which we are all familiar; interactional dynamics, identity formation, institutional and structural inequalities, knowledge production, and so on. To accomplish this they argued that specific sociological theories could be incorporated into curricula in a way that integrates teaching and research in the social sciences.

Above I have highlighted just a few of the disciplinary initiatives and individual contributions of sociologists that have attempted to infuse sociology with a more deterministic approach to educating its scholars through SoTL. A thorough examination of the literature on teaching and learning in sociology reveals that while the

discipline has truly embraced SoTL as a core component of its teaching and learning philosophy, this effort has fallen short. Many scholars who understand the advantages of incorporating SoTL in our classrooms simply find sociology lagging in comparison with other disciplines in related social sciences. Our classrooms are social sites. The application of sociological theories and concepts that help us understand social phenomena can transform our classrooms into sites in which sociological theory meets pedagogical praxis. Should this not be, after all, our primary mission as teaching sociologists?

RPTS: Exploring Sociology's Full Potential in the Classroom

By viewing the classroom as a social space, the students and instructor can explore the entire range of sociological themes; interactional dynamics, identity formation, institutional effects, structural inequalities, and knowledge production, among others. We can think about them as *reflective practices in teaching sociology* (RPTS). RPTS is a model that encourages us to use our sociological knowledge to reflect and address the fundamental impulses of sociology, thereby linking the insights of SoTL, the sociology of education, and the discipline as a whole. With it we can make our classrooms spaces where students will see sociology come alive - as “idea incubators” where students and instructors fulfill Mills' vision, unleashing the potential of the sociological imagination.

(Author's Note: I am in the process of developing a range of annotated syllabi that demonstrate practical classroom applications of RPTS. Please email me at dengelman@mail.usf.edu for more information and copies of these materials.

The Case for Double-Blind Peer Grading



Todd Beer

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Blogging at SociologyToolbox.com

A quick search of the internet will result in dozens of arguments for and against having students grade each other's papers. I want to argue for it as one of many pedagogical tools. I use it for one of the papers in my Introduction to Sociology and Anthropology course of 25 students. I believe the primary, but not only, value is simply for the students to see how their peers write (good, bad, or ugly). Without such an opportunity, students could complete their collegiate career and never have any context for their writing - beyond the feedback of each of their professors (or TAs depending on the institution). To foster this, I actively, rather than randomly, decide who grades which paper, trying to ensure that weak writers see the paper of a stronger writer. Of course, I do not reveal this aspect to the students.

Beyond just the writing style of a peer, the assignment can expose students to each other's arguments and reasoning. I use this technique in an assignment examining racial inequality in education opportunities and the use of affirmative action in college admissions. Students have to take a stand at the end of the paper and argue their case. When possible, I have them read a paper with an argument opposed to that which they made in their paper.

Another value of peer grading is that students have to really know and even revisit the material in order to grade another paper. How can you know if the peer-author fulfilled the rubric requirements if you don't know the theories and arguments of the corresponding reading very well?

And, yes, it is essential to provide the grader with a detailed rubric and specific expectations.

One complaint online is that students think that their peers are too easy on them. To encourage sufficiently rigorous grading, I grade the grading. Students earn part of the overall paper grade through their grading of a peer's work. Over several years, I have found that many students give their peers lower scores than I end up assigning. To further ensure the rigor of the peer grading, I replicate the double-blind peer review process by removing names from the papers, coding each with a number, and not sharing the identity of either the author or the grader. To do this, I collect physical papers with title pages on them. I manually number the title page and the first page of the paper before separating the two. I find this easier than maintaining the confidentiality of electronic files and electronic comments. This process also provides an opportunity for me to teach about the similar review process for academic research.

To relieve any anxiety about their grade potentially being tanked by an errant peer, I am very clear that I have the final say on every grade. I review the peer grading before assigning any final grade. As always, students may appeal to me for a different grade if they feel it is justified. This, of course, does not eliminate the time I spend grading. It likely actually adds to it so that should not be the motivation for using this tool.

This process cannot be done at the very end of the semester without some planning because you need to leave time to collect the papers, de-identify them, redistribute them, allow the peers to grade them, then review the grading as the instructor, re-identify them, and redistribute them. Using this tool does delay the final feedback that students receive on their writing, so I would not use it for the very first paper of the course either.

I have yet to formally evaluate any improvement in student learning outcomes from this process, but any comments I have received in evaluations or discussion are generally positive.

Avoiding Doom and Gloom in the Classroom



Eric Allen, PhD Candidate



**Jake Hammond, PhD Candidate
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“Ugh, this class is depressing!” Many sociology instructors have heard this statement, or something similar, uttered by one of their undergraduate students. It never feels good. Why is this reaction to sociology courses prevalent amongst undergraduate students, and what can we do to combat it? Is this simply an issue with today’s students, or are there instructional interventions that can improve student morale in undergraduate sociology courses?

According to Johnson (2005), those of us who teach sociology often contribute to this phenomenon by emphasizing the severity of problems, while devoting little attention to progress or solutions. This approach leaves students feeling the world is an unjust place that cannot realistically be changed. To be fair, Johnson (2005) concedes that sociology instructors face a dilemma when teaching about social problems. If we focus too much on solutions to social problems and empowering students to engage in social change efforts, we can foster naive expectations about the ability of individuals to solve social problems, and send incorrect messages about the nature and causes of social problems. However, if we focus too little on solutions and student empowerment, we can foster

apathy and cynicism. Sociology instructors often take the latter approach, which can contribute to depressed student morale. Johnson (2005) argues we should strike a balance between the two by teaching that problems are deeply rooted, and by giving significant attention to solutions. Moreover, instructors should empower undergraduate students to contribute constructively to their communities and wider society.

How can we effectively teach about social problems while buoying student morale and self-efficacy, and empowering students to participate in solutions? Johnson (2005) proposes five steps. First, explain that social problems are socially constructed, and identify the process through which particular issues gain attention and support. Second, present concepts and evidence of social problems without exaggerating the magnitude of them; otherwise, students can feel overwhelmed and apathetic. Third, locate core causes of the social problem by introducing theories and evidence. Fourth, identify structural solutions through various teaching strategies. For example, have students brainstorm solutions that address the causes of social problems, expose students to social change organizations in your community through service-learning opportunities, or present readings or videos that exemplify proposed solutions. Last, encourage students to use their sociological imaginations to identify individual behaviors that contribute to structural solutions. By emphasizing that social institutions are created, reproduced, and transformed through human behavior, instructors can highlight the link between structure and agency. Importantly, most instructors only address steps two and three; many briefly cover steps one and four. Rarely do instructors address step five (Johnson 2005).

While Johnson (2005) views the lack of attention to solutions as a primary contributor to low morale in sociology classrooms, there are additional strategies sociology instructors can implement to foster a more optimistic, yet realistically-grounded, learning environment. One strategy is to re-conceptualize how we view failure. While pessimists view failure as personal and permanent, optimists see failure as non-personal and temporary (Buffo 2013). Pointing to

examples of the temporary failures and subsequent successes of historical social movements may foster hope in an otherwise ‘doom and gloom’ environment. Next, we suggest eschewing top-down, authoritarian teaching methods in favor of collaborative and participatory classroom structures, which can enhance student self-esteem and transform students from passive to active learners. Finally, modeling enthusiasm can inspire students and lead to a more effective learning environment devoid of apathy (Mitchell 2013). As instructors, we have the unique opportunity to empower students and help them alter systems of inequality to create a more fair and just world. By following the suggestions outlined in this article, we believe student morale can be improved and cynicism reduced in the sociology classroom.

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Beyond Traditional Competency in Sociology Pedagogy



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‘In schools where teachers are sensitized to the existence of bi/multilingual skills and practices, there is a greater likelihood they will include them as foundations for the development of further language, literacy and learning (Molyneux, Scull, & Aliani, 2016, p 337). While we as sociology professors are incorporating such skills and practices as our classrooms become more diverse, there seems to be limited cultural information given to us regarding our students who are deaf. Rather than being considered as a bi-lingual group with cultural experiences, students who are deaf become the students in our classes that have a disability and require accommodation. While other minority groups have seen greater accommodation and inclusion, students who are deaf are overlooked as a bi-lingual group. Yet, it is this inclusion and comfortableness to talk with their instructors that contribute to greater academic success and retention for Deaf students in college programs.

Despite the challenges, there has been a rise in attendance at colleges and universities by students’ who are deaf. Like other students, young people who are deaf or hard of hearing recognize the need for a college education to secure a good job that provides sustainable income. The statistics reflecting the retention rate for students who are deaf is still significantly lower than hearing students within mainstream college campuses: 25% vs. 60%, respectively (Smith, 2004). Research studies are critically needed to understand the challenges for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and to explore ways for greater inclusion and positive interactions within mainstream classrooms.

While Deaf students often struggle more than hearing students due to lack of background knowledge and vocabulary, Marshark, Sapere, and Convertino (2005) found in their research that part of the challenge was the instructors in mainstream classrooms. Many of the instructor’s interviewed had low expectations of their Deaf students. Part of the reason for these low expectations and/or the limited desire to develop or improve their methodologies included the few number of Deaf students they teach and/or the lack of instruction provided beyond the recognition of their ‘disability’. This negative attitude, the researchers

believe, has resulted in creating additional barriers for Deaf students to achieve their potential. Liversidge (2003, citing Porter, et al, 1999) also noted this negative culture: 'Deaf and hard-of-hearing students are outsiders in a college community that is governed by the rules and practices of the "hearing" culture. Unless those outside the hearing culture simply accept the challenges and barriers and follow the rules of the hearing environment, they are overlooked or labeled as troublemakers.'

Because of these factors that potentially create barriers for Deaf students continuing their higher education, I want to critically look at the experiences of Deaf students in higher education who use sign language and require an interpreter in the classroom but also the instructors in the higher education learning environment who have had Deaf students who have utilized ASL interpreters in their classrooms. Through open-ended questions via Survey Monkey, I would like to know of other instructors' experiences, best practices and some of the challenges they've experienced.

I have just submitted this to our IRB but would certainly appreciate hearing from anyone who has taught in mainstream classrooms where an ASL interpreter has been utilized. If you are interested in participating when our study when it is approved, I would appreciate learning of your interest. Simply e-mail me at cminton@calbaptist.edu so that when the study is approved, I will send you the link. It is my hope that universities in the course of their PhD sociology programs have more recently included Deaf students as part of a unique cultural, bi-lingual group and that good, inclusive practices are being taught. I, like many others, simply learned through my mistakes and had wished I had been better prepared. It is hoped this research project might provide some insights as to what might still be lacking in our instruction that would have better prepared us for helping our Deaf students complete their educational goals.

Notes on Seeking an Egalitarian Classroom



Michael Brinkman

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As educators, we have the duty to pass knowledge on to others. As sociologists, we have an opportunity to guide people toward moral autonomy and self-reflection – to encourage them to reflect upon the social forces that shaped them and to see the world critically. To me, this is one of the most rewarding parts of being a sociologist, an element of our profession where we can directly relay what sociology has to offer to the world. Yet instilling moral autonomy, self-reflection, and building critical thinking capabilities often involves encouraging others to think differently than they're used to and it follows that the sociology classroom is a place where preexisting notions of the world are frequently challenged. For some students this is liberating, but for others this can sometimes be unpleasant or uncomfortable. Indeed, a thorough understanding of the world involves unpacking social phenomena that have been pushed under the rug in dominant discourse – and often left at the recesses of the mind.

In my experiences as an instructor, there are methods that we can adopt to make this process gentler for students, while still remaining true to our ultimate mission of confronting ruling ideologies. Throughout the semester, I ask that my students compose and reflect upon photographs that get them thinking about the course readings, lectures, and class discussions. The pictures can be really anything that catches their eye - posed or candid – portraying a person or object – literal or abstract - a potential photo might even be a

newspaper headline they come across. While the photos can be whatever that gets them thinking sociologically, I ask them to think creatively by engaging the ordinary in extraordinary ways, have varied subject matter between their photos, and write about 400 words for each photo.

A main advantage to this approach is that it enables students to connect their own experiences to the course material. In this way, students build from thoughts and concerns most central to their day to day lives and I am better able to address their ideas on a personal level. As a result, in my experience, using this semester long project also aids in the construction of an egalitarian learning environment conducive to challenging the ruling ideologies that seem so fundamental to our students' sense of selves. It also strengthens critical thinking abilities, as I pose them questions in a "first draft" of sorts that lead them to crucial interrogations they might not have otherwise considered. As many people enroll in college in order to build a better life for themselves, it seems important that, as sociologists, we impart the capability and desire for self-reflection necessary to defining what constitutes this better life. To accomplish this, I've found it is useful to recognize our students not merely as our pupils, but as people with unique encounters with our course material. Exploring these backdrops ensures that a given sociology course is not just another class, but a transformative experience.

It's Not About Your Teaching, But About Their Learning

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"Student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education. Generally speaking, the concept of

"student engagement" is predicated on the belief that learning improves when students are inquisitive, interested, or inspired, and that learning tends to suffer when students are bored, dispassionate, disaffected, or otherwise "disengaged." Stronger student engagement or improved student engagement are common instructional objectives expressed by educators." Readers can learn more about the Jigsaw Classroom at www.jigsaw.org

Student engagement is a critical aspect of quality post-secondary education. Generally, faculty members believe, and research confirms, that student engagement helps achieve one key goal of postsecondary education, i.e., the development of critical thinking skills [2]. Further, there is evidence that student engagement facilitates learning outcomes, and no less importantly, contributes to students and instructors having a more pleasurable time together.

One active learning technique that appears to contribute to active learning is the "Jigsaw Classroom." The jigsaw classroom is an approach in which learners are organized into "jigsaw" groups, each member with a different, yet complementary, task. Learners prepare to perform these tasks both individually (at home) and within "expert" groups (in the classroom), and later return to their "home teams" to peer teach to members of their "jigsaw" groups. After the teaching circle within jigsaw teams is completed, students reflect on and assess their collective understanding. While the actual implementation of this approach may vary from instructor to instructor, in my own case I have found that the technique succeeds best when all activities are guided through carefully designed sets of questions that vary from module to module, and learners are evaluated both for their individual and collective work.

The jigsaw classroom was developed mainly with the goal of fostering cooperation rather than competition among learners [3]. The guiding premise is that the success of each student

not only facilitates, but is actually critical to, the success of all students. Indeed, the technique was developed by a group of social psychologists concerned with understanding the “malaise” pervasive in educational institutions in the United States, malaise which culminated in the 1990s in the tragic Columbine school shooting, continued over other mass shootings, and is most likely still with us. These professionals attributed this malaise to the overtly competitive environment of educational establishments that led to students feeling frustrated, neglected or outright excluded. Instructors within this environment, willingly or not, created “winners” and “losers” -- the first to be admired or envied, the losers to be put down or left behind. While researchers did not doubt that the behaviors displayed by the protagonists at Columbine and elsewhere indicated severe psychological perturbations, they also concluded that signaling individual students as “bad apples”, or medicalizing their malaise as “psychopathology”, failed to acknowledge problems within the educational system and the broader society. The book “Nobody Left to Hate”, by Elliott Aronson, one within this group of researchers, compellingly summarizes the personal and professional journey that led to the development of the jigsaw classroom [4].

Since 2015, the year I spent at York University in Canada as a Fulbright Visiting Professor, taking a break from at a very research intensive position in the United States, with minimal teaching responsibilities and no undergraduate teaching, I had the opportunity to put this technique into practice to achieve the learning goals of a new course on the politics of global health policy. While I had already tried it briefly as recent PhD and novice instructor in sociology back in 2005, and experienced its potential, back then I did not have the number of students nor the necessary institutional structure to apply it systematically. I finally had both as I developed my new course at York, which resulted in a very successful experience: I collected anecdotal evidence, from students and faculty, that

students felt very engaged and in charge of their learning, to a significant degree thanks to jigsaw. As I returned to York University in the fall of 2016 on a teaching intensive position with the Faculty of Health, School of Health Policy and Management/Global Health Program, I implemented the technique once again, over three terms, in two undergraduate, 2nd and 4th year courses. I then collected yet more anecdotal evidence indicating great enthusiasm for the jigsaw approach, which has encouraged me to continue using it and learning from it, through my students’, and my own, experience.

Because the evidence I have thus far collected for the success of jigsaw is anecdotal, this past summer I applied for funding from the Innovation in Teaching Award, sponsored by the Faculty of Health at York. I was fortunate enough to receive this award, so I am currently collecting data to systematically document and evaluate the jigsaw classroom, with the help of an enthusiastic team of undergraduate assistants whose members are my own students. I was also able to offer a workshop, sponsored by the York Teaching Commons, to share this experience and train other faculty members. Finally, I look forward to presenting the results of my ongoing investigation to other Scholarship of Teaching and Learning colleagues in the near future.





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When Your Class Materials are Posted Online



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I recently discovered some of my course materials posted on one of those for-profit websites that exploits students' goodwill for financial gain. If you haven't heard of such tools just yet, you will soon, and it's possible that some of your course materials are at this very moment available on such a website. In my initial panic, I did what I often do when encountering a teaching conundrum: I reached out to my online networks to ask others about their experiences. In the online and in-person conversations that ensued,¹ I came to think of the problem of online course document sharing as a set of three overlapping concerns. Thinking about them together helped me decide what I'll do in the inevitable, Black Mirror-like future where my course materials, lectures, facilitated discussions, and appearance in the classroom are shared publicly without my knowledge. Like it or not, this is an impending reality with disparate consequences particularly for marginalized faculty and students.

First, there's the obvious problem of academic integrity. Having early access to course materials like exams allows students to claim, falsely, that they have achieved course objectives. As a sociologist, though, I can't help but think about how the concept of academic integrity is class inflected. Shared course materials allow some students (notably, those with the resources to purchase those materials, or those with the cultural capital to know where to find them) to gain an unfair advantage. I have to think about academic integrity within my institution's legal frameworks and *also* consider how those frameworks might be unjustly applied.

Furthermore, as I have learned especially in recent years, students often don't know what "academic integrity" means, despite my best efforts to explain how and why such seemingly archaic practices like proper citation matter, or when collaboration on an assignment turns into cheating, or how slightly rephrasing sources from

¹ An enormous thank-you to the colleagues who contributed to this conversation in person and online.

the internet still counts as plagiarism. When the rubber meets the road in an assignment, it's clear that students still don't know what "academic integrity" means or why it matters. Which students understand academic integrity and which don't is also class-inflected, related, for example, to the ways their high schools are resourced to teach about writing, specifically. Thinking about how my course materials ended up on this for-profit note-sharing website requires me to consider these inequities.

A second concern for me relates to my teaching materials as intellectual property. Increasingly these days, it seems I am being asked by my institution, even by well-meaning colleagues to share teaching materials and strategies with little discussion of attribution or ownership. I am certainly guilty of making these requests of colleagues, too, and there is an emerging best practice of citing colleagues' teaching strategies and assignments. Is the practice of sharing my course materials in a public, especially for-profit forum just one more way I lose control over my teaching materials as my own intellectual property? What does it mean that a corporation profits directly from my materials without my consent? Would it matter if my course materials were shared via a nonprofit course sharing website?

A final set of concerns relates to my pedagogy, specifically, what kinds of teaching strategies I use and how to make them less "cheatable," or, more importantly for me, how to make them more likely to accurately measure students' learning. Course materials that make it easy to cheat (for example, multiple-choice exams) may be less likely to measure students' learning than, say, open-ended exam questions and papers. I can hear the groans among my teaching-focused colleagues, those of us who teach 4/4 or more every year and those who teach large Intro sections, for example. Again, there are numerous strategies to help faculty manage large courses and sizable teaching loads, from using rubrics to grade papers in non-writing intensive courses, to very

brief, one-sentence, tweet-style writing assignments, to structured peer review, to a billion other creative strategies my colleagues are developing and using every day. Designing course materials that allow me to better understand student learning might have the side benefit of making my courses less able to be hacked.

What should you do when you discover your course materials posted in an online forum? As a practical matter, keeping track of where my course materials are posted online seems like a game of virtual whack-a-mole I'm likely to continue to lose, especially as my technological skills lose pace with those of my students. So I think my aim is to continue to design my courses such that sharing my materials *would not actually advantage* some students more than others. This may be a wholly impossible task, but it makes me think carefully about what kinds of assessments I employ: more reflection, more connecting individual experiences to course concepts, more open-ended questions, and less concept definition and regurgitation. What should you do about your shared-online course materials? Perhaps one answer to this question is to adjust your course design, in effect, to shift your teaching.

Teaching Modern Romance in the Era of #MeToo



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When I designed the first course that I would be teaching at my graduate institution, I had no idea how contentious its topic might become. The name, "Modern Romance", was inspired by the book of the same title by comedian and actor Aziz Ansari and sociologist Eric Klinenberg. This January, Ansari was accused of sexual misconduct in a detailed exposé. In the midst of a national conversation on sexual harassment and assault, the

article sparked an outcry of varied responses and has become one of the most controversial allegations since the start of #MeToo. As I prepared for my class, I knew I had an interesting semester ahead of me.

While my course does not focus on sexual assault as a main topic, our readings and discussions on virginity loss, hookup culture, dating, sex, and pornography all address it, along with a number of other controversial issues. Initially, I worried that I was ill-equipped for such contentious topics and was concerned that my students' discomfort would inhibit discussion. However, my experience has been the opposite; my students are incredibly eager to read, write, and talk about these issues which are so important to their everyday lives. They enjoy being asked to think critically about their experiences as individuals embedded in society. They appreciate having the opportunity to reflect on research that may challenge or confirm what they believe about the world around them. And they feel more confident engaging in controversial discussions when they have the vocabulary, research, and skills to succeed. I still feel hesitant to speak as an expert on some issues, but I am lucky to have access to campus resources which prepare me to facilitate productive classroom conversations. Through my involvement with my campus Center for Teaching Innovation and participation in an Inclusive Teaching Institute, I have a set of tools that equip me to deal with these difficult discussions.

One of the strategies I learned for the first week of class involved asking my students to collectively brainstorm what a good discussion looks like. After soliciting input, we agreed on a set of guidelines, which I then posted on the course website as our "Discussion Norms". Setting ground rules for discussion has helped create a learning community centered on open communication and mutual respect between the students and myself.

I also had students complete an module addressing proper discussion etiquette, tips for asking thoughtful discussion questions, and phrases for engaging in more productive conversation. They learned about the LARA method for communicating across differences: listen, affirm, respond, add information. After students completed this module, I smiled in class the next day as I heard one person after another say, "I'd like to build on what [so and so] just said..." In a writing reflection, one student expressed her enthusiasm for active listening and engaging in dialogue versus debate: "...really opening myself up to what others are saying will help me have a deeper understanding of the text, and my classmates." Others wrote that the LARA method would be a helpful tool for addressing controversial topics in class.

Finally, as a sociologist, I believe my primary job is to shift students away from individual-level thinking to a position of critical consciousness, where experiences are situated in a larger social context. One simple way for me to do this has been through strategic course design: I only include empirical social research on my syllabus. Students then relate this work to their everyday lives through discussion and news article presentations, but I push them to connect each of their anecdotes or opinions to the evidence-based research we have read. This encourages students to view personal experiences as important and relevant in the classroom, but helps them recognize that every discussion contribution must be grounded in the literature. Although this is a skill I am still trying to emphasize, frequently referencing our texts has led to more rigorous and analytical conversations.

Sociology as a field is comprised of a variety of social issues that are often contentious and political in nature. While teaching in the midst of a national outcry over trigger warnings, microaggressions, and safe spaces, I have found Arao and Clemens (2013) idea of "brave spaces" to be helpful. My focus has been on making every effort to create a comfortable space to discuss difficult issues in the classroom. I am still learning

how to succeed in this, but I plan to dive in to these controversies, using every opportunity to cultivate my students' sociological imagination.

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Inmates, Offenders and Scholars: Some Thoughts on Teaching in Prison

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One of the highlights in my over forty years of teaching has been a decade teaching college level courses in prisons. I'm quite certain that the men and women that I met in maximum and minimum security prisons taught me more than I ever taught them. We know that return to prison is inversely correlated with years of education received while incarcerated. So it's more of a "pay me now or pay me later" situation. I've attended degree-awarding graduations within the penitentiary walls and I'll never get over the irony that a person needed to commit a felony to get an education. At any rate, allow me to share some reflections (not suggesting that they are scientifically derived, however) on teaching in prison.

You're entering a different culture

When I address a new group of inmates, I beg their indulgence. Frankly, I don't have a "clue" what it is like to live in their world. I ask them to help me understand the norms, values, attitudes and beliefs that operate in their world. You are in their world... sociologist heal thyself. Listen and pay attention.

Inmate life has formal and informal organization and hierarchies

Using Goffman's notion, you're in a "total institution." Virtually all forms of life are controlled. Don't be surprised if your class gets abruptly cancelled because of a "lock-down." Much of life and movement is controlled. Basically, **you** don't get to choose. That being said, inmates and prison authorities maintain an informal reality and related hierarchies. It's important to look for and learn from these structures.

Symbol systems and labels

Initially you become aware of the symbolic structure: uniforms of inmates, correction officers, and administrators. It's a paramilitary environment. As time goes on you become more alert to gang tattoos and culturally relative symbols and language. They are aware of labeling and the uphill battles they may face on release when they need to "check the felon box" on a job application or explain to a date "So where were you over the last 10 years?"

Prescribed and informal lifeworlds

Inmates have ways of getting things done. Often I've found these ways do not conform to the faculty manual or the college code of conduct! For example, I've learned that it may not be wise to ask how certain unwanted class behaviors "got taken care of."

Interaction

I learned a few things concerning my interactions with inmates. It is incumbent on you to earn the respect of those on the inside. There are practical and humane reasons to do this. For many of these students, you represent an education world they have never seen: you might as well have landed from Mars. But, they are facing challenges to come to the class in the first place. Know that inmates recognize your value. They're grateful that you're there. Your honesty, integrity and concern for their learning are translated into scholarly hard academic work and improved self-

esteem on their part. For some you may be the first person who showed levels of care and respect. In this respect, I've always avoided asking "what are you in for?" Basically, it doesn't matter. Inmates will tell you if they want you to know.

Of course, there's so much more, but hopefully this snapshot will encourage you to take sociology to incarcerated scholars whose work I have come to admire.

Teaching in Times of Crisis



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Mass shootings and violence are taking a toll on our students, both in their psycho-social development and their ability to learn. Since the first notable mass school shooting at Columbine High School in April of 1999, teachers and students have responded to these events with a mix of outrage, prayer, advocacy and sorrow. The most recent event in Parkland, Florida highlights the impact these tragedies have on our society and our students. The reoccurring feeling of helplessness in the aftermath of these tragedies puts pressure on faculty to begin to prepare for their continued inevitability. This preparation can start at the beginning of every semester with a few "tools" and a clear pedagogical approach. Faculty are at the 'front-line' in providing a social and emotional safe space to respond to societal crises so students may effectively cope and learn in an academic setting.

As faculty respond to societal crises they must take the developmental level of their students, and the role of college as a primary and secondary socializing agent into consideration. Firstly, while much has been written regarding cognitive levels of young children, there is convincing evidence that all cognitive and emotional development is not complete by the time students enter post-secondary education. From the seminal work *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme*, Perry (1968) noted as students' progress through college they learn to see the world less in a dichotomy of right and wrong and instead embrace the "multiplicity" and depth of experiences of "others". Perry continues to assert that upper classmen emerge into a stage of personal commitment in which they have clearly formed values and beliefs and are willing to defend them (Perry, 1968). A student's personal understanding of his/her own values and priorities in the context of personal identity is "essential for the accurate assessment of the threat posed by a particular life situation and for the competent handling of it" (Kobasa, 1979). Accompanying these values and beliefs is the students' desire for increased independence from family yet also with a corresponding increased dependence on peers and faculty (Magolda, 2004). Class attendance, submitting assignments and life skill tasks such as doing laundry all become independent decisions that students must make. College becomes a socializing agent for students in which faculty and classmates fulfil the role of primary and secondary socializing agents. The connection to peers and faculty, particularly for students living on campus, is paramount for successful/positive and non-traumatic responses in times of crisis.

There are some simple elements faculty can incorporate into their syllabus, on the first day of class and throughout the term that encourage an environment which promotes a safe and/or brave space for classroom discussion and reflection especially if a crisis should occur. To accomplish this, course syllabi should ideally have a section or

statement regarding how students can contribute to class discussion and also a commitment that their ideas will be listened to respectfully. Many campuses' have prewritten statements on diversity of opinion in the classroom that can be incorporated into one's syllabus. Equally important to this statement is the acknowledgement of the statement by the faculty member on the first day of class, and as necessary throughout the semester. Students will more likely understand and appreciate the faculty's commitment to discussion and reflection if such a statement is highlighted the section of the syllabus on the first day of class. Furthermore, depending on the course content, restating the commitment to thoughtful sharing throughout the semester is important.

The behavior of faculty in the classroom should ideally be modeled on behavior that recognizes the emotional needs and desires of the students. Faculty can model a supportive environment in several ways. First, faculty must be able to demonstrate vulnerability. This includes acknowledgement when they don't know the answer. Being unable to jump in with the correct response will become incredibly important when a crisis occurs. Having students witness faculty acknowledge that they don't know the answer but are willing to search for it, or discuss possible alternative answers, is key to modelling inquiry necessary in higher education. Faculty must also be able to allow students to stumble through explanations with patience. Critical to a successful class is also the ability of the faculty to actively intervene in class discussion when necessary to promote inclusion and limit inappropriate or hateful/prejudice statements.

When a crisis occurs faculty should be prepared to come to class with a "tool box" to necessitate a supportive environment for their students. This toolbox needs to include all current and relative facts. If the event is in progress, it may be difficult to have complete details but effort should be taken to gather as much information as

available. Faculty should ensure that information they are receiving are from multiple sources, including both conservative and liberal news sources. If applicable faculty can either develop, or brainstorm with the students, to develop an inclusive resource list. This may include direct services to individuals affected by the crisis (e.g., supplies for hurricane relief victims), or counseling services for students experiencing high anxiety from the event (e.g. student health center). Finally, faculty must demonstrate humility and have a clear perspective and respect for their place in the context of the crisis.

In-class activities can be undertaken to help students process the crisis. Class assignments can include solitary activities such as a "One Minute Paper" with a simple writing prompt such as "Describe how you are feeling about the event?" . This activity can be a segue into a reading out loud of their papers and sharing with the class. Faculty can lead a guided discussion by asking specific questions for students to respond. Ideally, faculty should try to tie the issues back into the concepts that have been covered in class in order to provide the opportunity for students to see the direct link between learning and practice.

Lastly, faculty need to be attune to their feelings and their ability to lead a class during a crisis. Faculty need to use the awareness of their emotional connection to the events in the way they guide classroom discussion. If comfortable, faculty may want to also show that emotional side with their students. Seeking help from colleagues, department chairs, faculty learning centers , and school counseling are all resources faculty can use to mitigate the stress that crises have on them and their role as leaders and role models in the classroom.

The role of faculty in providing a safe/brave space for students to understand the complexity of the world, including crises, has become increasingly salient today. Students access to media coverage of events is omnipresent,

and processing the information thoroughly and thoughtful may require guidance from faculty. A comprehensive syllabus, a ‘tool kit’, and sense of humility in the classroom, might be the best way to arm faculty and keep students safe.

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The Sociological Imagination as a Bottleneck: Using the Decoding Process to Improve Student Learning



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As professional sociologists the sociological imagination comes as second-nature to us. We are able to quickly—and often unconsciously—analyze social phenomena, examine statistics, and critique public policies by imagining the historical and contemporary social forces at play. However, many of our students struggle to do the same. While our students may be able to identify social structures—such as race, gender, or class—they often revert to individualized explanations concerning personal behavior or individual anecdotal experiences to explain how and why certain social inequalities exist or endure. In the *Decoding the Disciplines Paradigm*, Dr. David Pace (2017), outlines how the “decoding” process can help instructors

overcome the problems with student learning they encounter in the classroom. My application of the decoding process below explores how decoding may help us better prepare our students to develop their own sociological imagination.

The decoding process begins by identifying a bottleneck defined as a place where students encounter difficulties relating to course content, disciplinary processes or practices, and/or motivational or emotional concerns relating to the course and/or discipline. Let’s take the sociological imagination as a bottleneck for many of our students. We want students to not only recognize social forces, such as race, gender, and/or class, but to explain enduring inequalities without reverting to explanations relying on individual behavior. For many of our students, the disciplinary practice of suspending our biases toward individual choices and behaviors presents a bottleneck they must pass through to fully appreciate the value of the sociological imagination.

The next step in decoding requires we outline the mental processes that we *as professionals* enact when applying our own sociological imagination, rather than imagining how we teach it. For example, when we think about inequality, we often begin by suspending our bias toward individualized explanations, then we ask questions that seek broader or more relational explanations. We might identify historical factors that contribute to present day patterns or we might think about how inequalities are connected to other issues stemming from relations of race, gender, or class. We might ask questions about how economic inequalities are associated with problems in education or housing. If we are less familiar with the topic, we will seek to improve our understanding by reading articles, books, or perform other forms of research. While these mental processes may come natural to us, they do not for our students; therefore, we must make these practices as explicit and transparent as possible to our students.

To make these steps transparent we must model them in the classroom for our students. For example, if professional sociologists start by asking questions, we can imagine our own classes focused around a set of important questions relating to course content. For example, you could ask students about what factors contribute to a high unemployment rate. When you present such questions in the classroom, you can have students interview you about how a professional sociologist begins to answer this question. You can provide them with a list of questions to ask that are designed to illuminate your own mental processes employed in search of an answer. Imagine the impact modeling in the classroom how you enact your own sociological imagination for our students could be as you demonstrate what you do when you read the news; analyze charts, graphs, and data; or approach your own research questions.

The next step in the decoding process is giving students practice and providing feedback. This aligns with a plethora of research demonstrating the value of hands-on activities, active learning, and practice in student learning outcomes. The final step requires assessment of student learning outcomes. By creating a scaffold assignment, students could be required to explicitly identify the questions they asked themselves when beginning an assignment, discuss how or why they asked such questions, explain the resources they sought in completing the assignment, and finishing with a formalized essay that demonstrates their ability to apply their own sociological imagination.

While the decoding process may not prevent students from struggling with the sociological imagination, it does provide a structured way for instructors to approach helping students move through this bottleneck. By identifying our own mental processes, modeling them for students, giving structured opportunities for practice and feedback, we can better demystify the sociological imagination for our students.

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Crafting Online Discussion in a Sociology of Gender Class

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Discussions provide an opportunity for students to engage with their peers to reinforce learning. As Kuh and his colleagues note in their review of the literature on student success: “Student interaction with peers can positively influence overall academic development” (42) and “among the peer interactions that foster learning includes discussing course content” (42). Given the importance of discussion, online course developers strive to incorporate meaningful discussion into their classes. However, designing and facilitating online discussions can be challenging. The traditional format of requiring an answer and a comment on two students’ posts can often produce perfunctory responses. Students typically do not go beyond simple responses to their peers, essentially to agree with or “like” their responses. The beneficial aspects of peer interaction seem to be lost. As a result, several researchers (Cho and Tobias, 2016; Chou, 2012; Dunlap and Lowenthal, 2011; Oh and Kim, 2016) have attempted to re-design the discussion format to encourage more student interaction. This note will describe my re-design of discussion forums in my online sociology of gender course.

My online sociology of gender course draws students from a wide spectrum of majors. There are a smattering of sociology majors and a sizeable minority of women’s studies majors. So, students have a range of sociological knowledge about gender. Some come into the course critiquing the gender binary, while others accept a gender binary. Moving the latter group away from this uncritical approach to a more expansive understanding of gender as a social construction is

a course goal. Discussion with their peers helps facilitate such learning.

I created a two-tiered discussion format. Two to four first tier discussions are in each teaching module, and students simply complete them. Students then proceed to the single graded discussion per module. The prompt in these discussions direct students to peruse the completion graded discussions and select one or two student postings to incorporate into their answer. To avoid social loafing, students must answer all completion graded discussion to earn a grade on the graded discussion.

To illustrate, consider this set of questions on intersexuality. The completion graded question asked students to consider this scenario:

You are a guest on a talk show with Martha Coventry, intersex advocate and Dr. Gearhart, a physician who routinely "fixes" infants who are born intersex by assigning a gender surgically. Craft an argument that agrees with one and disagrees with the other.

Since this discussion is held early in the class before they have delved into social constructionism, some students answer the question based upon a non-critical understanding of the gender binary agreeing wholeheartedly with Dr. Gearhart. If they have a more critical view, they side with Coventry.

The graded discussion prompt asked them to reflect on the first-tier question:

Read the paragraphs posted by students in preparation for their "guest appearance" on an intersexuality panel. Choose two posts and tell why you agree or disagree with their positions.

Upon reviewing students' posts in these discussions, one can see movement in their positions. For example, this student, while still holding onto her beliefs, does begin to understand the other side:

"I would also like to comment on Arthur's post. He has the opposite view from mine but I can see where he is coming from. He states that if there is no immediate health risks to the child then the gender should not be chosen for

that child, rather wait until that child can decide for themselves. I understand this."

This second student came into the course with one idea, and then transformed her view when grappling with the course material. She pressed her view in interaction with another student's post:

"Of course, while I *initially* agreed with your belief that there are only two genders, I changed my mind after reading the information presented. Your belief in only two sexes, and therefore only two, separate genders, is an example of gender polarization."

In general, I have found that the redesigned format pushes students to engage each other at a cognitive level, illustrated by these two student posters. Rather than look for posts to "like" students need to grapple with their peers' ideas and perhaps transform their own. While, I have noticed such interactions in the "traditional" format, I have not seen the systematic engagement with others' ideas as I do in the redesigned format. Nevertheless, I continue to systematically examine posts in different sections to discover if these findings hold.

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Gender Through the Sociological Imagination



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On the first day of class I always ask students the following question: What is sociology? I get a range of responses that are not altogether surprising. The always original, "sociology is the study of society." Or, my personal favorite: "sociology examines how society affects people." I chose these two examples because they represent a common theme in the responses I receive. While the first ignores people, the second ignores people's agency, specifically. Both examples treat society as an agent; some entity that acts upon the individual. As I began to understand how students think about sociology, I started to ask myself how I might teach in a way that treats people as agents—while avoiding psychologizing—and at the same time attend to all the other important topics covered in a sociology class. It did not take long to find an answer: the sociological imagination.

While there are different ways I emphasize the sociological imagination in the courses I teach, in the following essay, I focus on an assignment I use in Sociology of Gender. As a final paper, I ask students to write an academic autobiography. This assignment is useful because it requires students to draw from the concepts/theories/ideas they have been learning all semester, but in a way that

applies directly to their lives. In the remainder of this essay, I discuss the assignment's instructions and how the paper sharpens students' sociological imagination.

Instructions

Drawing from Risman's (2004) conceptualization of gender as a structure, I ask students to analyze their gendered experiences at (1) the individual, (2) interactional, (3) and institutional levels. Focusing on these three levels gives students some guidance in how to organize their paper, but also provides flexibility. For example, they can discuss their gendered experiences in a variety of institutions (education, media, family, religion, etc). Similarly, at the identity and interactional levels, students may focus their attention on topics such as gender identity, socialization, accountability, romantic relationships, (etc). After reflecting on their gendered experiences—and using course material to do so—I instruct students to consider what their experiences reveal about how they have resisted and conformed to gender throughout their life. To conclude, students discuss how, upon reflecting on their gendered experiences, they might resist and/or work towards "undoing gender" (Butler 2004) in the future.

Gender Conformity/Resistance

While there are several concepts/theories/ideas that students use to make sense of their gendered experiences, two stand out: the changing nature of gender and doing gender. Applied to their experiences, students describe a variety of ways their lives have been shaped by institutional and historical forces.

For example, one student discussed how a grandmother was not allowed to attend college because the tuition was better spent on her grandmother's brother. Stories like this stand in stark contrast to students' own more subtle experiences with gender inequality, and more specifically, gender accountability. A young woman recalls being discouraged from declaring a major in engineering because the workload would keep her from spending time with her boyfriend. Similarly, a young man who entered college interested in design ultimately chose business at

the direction of his parents who thought the latter major “more responsible.” By reflecting on how their gendered experiences are similar/different from their parents/grandparents, students counter popular arguments that position gender inequality as a thing of the past. Rather than being something the U.S. has overcome, they recognize that gender inequality really just changes form. While more covert forms may be less acceptable today (e.g., a grandmother’s education being passed over for a male siblings), gender inequality often persists in more covert and subtle ways—as their experiences can attest.

Coming full circle, in their conclusions, students emphasize their role as agents who can “undo gender.” The gender structure and sociological imagination often frames their responses here, as well. Students discuss how they have, upon reflection, begun to recognize gender inequalities in institutions, interactions, and identity, and have started working to resist and change the gender structure as well. Said another way, by recognizing how they have been held accountable—and held others accountable—for doing gender, students rethink their gender identities, how they interact with others, and the ways their actions shape and are shaped by the social institutions they engage with.

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CONNECTING SOCIOLOGY TO THE COMMUNITY

The Faculty Plays the Student Role and the Student Plays the Faculty Role: Learning and Teaching as Researchers in the Field



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In the summer of 2017, Kristie LeBeau (student) and Leslie Wang (faculty) received a National Endowment for the Humanities-funded Summer Research Grant to study teachers in rural schools. The grant requires the student and faculty, each with their own research question and interest, to collaborate their work into one project. The relationship between the faculty and student is one of co-researchers rather than mentor-mentee. Our project is titled “What Does It Mean to be a Teacher in a Rural School?: A Case Study of Teachers in White County, Indiana,” where we interviewed kindergarten to 12th grade teachers. What is unique about the student-faculty relationship is to a greater extent the process in which we carried out our research and to a lesser extent examining our findings and analysis. This is a community study of Kristie’s hometown of Wolcott and the surrounding towns in White County, IN; the student is the “insider” and the faculty is the “outsider” of the community. Both Kristie and Leslie participated as co-interviewers with each teacher. Without Kristie’s participation as a co-researcher, access to the community would almost be impossible for Leslie; this is a reversal of roles typically between student and faculty.

For this project, our interest is learning about teachers’ life experiences and perspectives. Our criteria stipulates that the teachers have taught

full-time for at least one year in White County, IN, were available to meet with us during the summer, and willing to have their conversations with us recorded. Kristie made all the contacts with the teachers. Many of the teachers knew Kristie and her family. Therefore, in addition to having the interviews in their classrooms, school conference room, town's library, and in a restaurant, a few even invited us to their homes. In arranging the interviews, Kristie took into consideration that White County is located approximately 125 miles from South Bend, IN; she accommodated both Leslie's travel distance in addition to the teachers' schedules. As a gatekeeper, Kristie served as our access to teachers in the community. Many teachers would greet us and ask Kristie about her studies or family. This became a comfortable "ice-breaker" leading into the interview. After each interview, teachers were glad to mention names of colleagues as possible participants for Kristie to contact, regardless of whether they taught in the same school in White County; Kristie knew many of them. As an informant, Kristie often took the time outside of our interview schedule to explain to Leslie the cultures of the schools and the community or simply to clarify acronyms and jargons used by teachers. Throughout our project, Leslie took on the student role and Kristie took on the teacher role.

As co-interviewers, we constructed our interview questions into one piece, incorporating both of our research interests. Kristie was interested in exploring teachers' perceptions of school support and Leslie was interested in examining teachers' attitudes about diversity. The themes of our questions included the following: teachers' backgrounds, general misconceptions of rural schools, educational preparedness for teaching in rural schools, classroom culture and school culture, and sources of support. We ended our interviews allowing teachers to reflect on their roles. Kristie and Leslie asked different sets of questions, but we were each consistently asking the same sets throughout with each interview. We believed that maintaining this consistency was

vital so that teachers' variations in responses may be less likely due to our individual differences. We neither shared with the teachers nor provided indications during the interviews of our separate research interests. Further, the questions relating to school resources and support were asked by Leslie and the questions relating to school and classroom culture were asked by Kristie. As Kristie was a former student in the school district and a member of the community, we thought that teachers may be more willing to share their perceptions on school resources and support with Leslie, an "outsider" of the community. As Leslie is a college faculty member and a person of color, we thought that teachers may be more willing to share their perceptions on diversity in the classroom and the school with Kristie, an "insider" of the community and a white person. Our desire was to reduce teachers' discomfort in responding to our questions, particularly difficult or controversial questions. We were aware of our different statuses and identities as researchers, and wanted to provide teachers with the opportunity to share their stories comfortably. As we progressed with each interview, we became more comfortable with each other as co-interviewers. Away from our interviews, we would discuss the aspects that worked well and what we needed to refine for our future interviews. The culture of co-researchers is little studied in the sociological literature on interviews. We learned that it requires tremendous communication, organization, and teamwork between the researchers.

This project was an enriching experience for both of us. Seldom does a student have the opportunity to collaborate with a faculty member as an equal partner. Kristie learned to seek out the participants and initiate the conversations. Only Kristie has access to the community, and therefore the project depended on her ability to obtain participants. As a sociologist and qualitative researcher, Kristie taught Leslie about her culture and community. Similarly, Leslie had faith in Kristie to take the lead researcher role in both initiating the contacts with the participants and

socializing him into the community. As a sociologist and qualitative researcher, Leslie embraced the student role and learned about a culture very different from his experiences. As sociologists and researchers, students and faculty learn from each other and teach each other, especially in the community.

Tips for Preparing a TRAILS Resource in Research Methods and Statistics



May Takeuchi, PhD

**Area Editor, Research Methods and Statistics
Teaching and Learning Resources Library for
Sociology (TRAILS)
University of North Alabama**

In the era of information overload, it is becoming increasingly important for us to critically evaluate and utilize various information including those readily available online. Accordingly, those of us teaching research methods and statistics in the behavioral sciences are facing a greater need for quality teaching and learning resources to use in our courses.

TRAILS has published a number of assignments, activities, and syllabi that sociology instructors can use to integrate data analysis into undergraduate curriculum to enhance students' critical thinking. For example, TRAILS's special collection, "Integrating Data Analysis into the Undergraduate Curriculum," features activities and assignments designed to help students realize the rich potential of social science even at an early level and to connect them to the logico-empirical basis of the discipline. If you are interested in incorporating data analysis into your class, consider using one of the excellent publications featured in the special collection!

TRAILS has also published several dozen innovative instructional materials that are designed specifically for Research Methods/Statistics courses and are to be shared by teaching sociologists. Our collection of all-peer-reviewed resources include class activities, assignments, videos, or PowerPoint lectures; and we're on the lookout for more! If you have created instructional materials intended to help your students understand logic behind research methodology and master fundamental skills, please consider submitting them for publication in TRAILS, so other instructors can also share. Here are some tips for preparing a resource that other instructors would find useful and easy to adopt in TRAILS:

1. In the abstract, provide a brief description or summary of your resource. Be sure to include a few sociological buzzwords for search functions, so other instructors can find it easily in TRAILS.
2. Have "learning goals and objectives" clearly stated and be specific so that they are operationalized to be measurable in "assessments."
3. For assignments/exercises, consider attaching to the work sheet rubrics and/or instructions for grading. Those materials can include: 1) answer examples or examples of work by past students; and 2) common mistakes or shortfalls observed in students' works as well as examples of instructor responses to correct the mistakes and help improve students' work.
4. Be sure to submit to the right subject area. If the learning objectives of your teaching innovation do not directly address the issues of methods and statistics, consider submitting to the area aligned with the course in which you use the assignment or activity, for examples, "Introduction to Sociology," "Family," or "Criminology/Delinquency."
5. Students tend to stereotype courses such as research methods and statistics as "dry," "difficult" or "intimidating." Course syllabi that make the curriculum more approachable, show innovative teaching and learning, or incorporate unique

assignments/exercises are especially welcome! The resource collection of Research Methods and Statistics have currently fewer in the resource types of course syllabi and class activities comparing to other types such as assignments.

6. Finally, think about ways in which you could link your submission to the TRAILS resource collection on “Integrating Data Analysis into the Undergraduate Curriculum.” Perhaps we’ll feature it in the collection!

Now more than ever, we need teaching strategies that will engage students to actively learn and acquire basic research skills so they can understand and evaluate research conducted by government agencies and private organizations or make sense of “scientific claims” they encounter in news and social media. I would very much appreciate your support for the discipline’s continuous effort in developing and sharing innovative teaching resources with other teaching sociologists across the world.

Supporting Teaching and Learning as a TRAILS Area Editor



Andrea D. Miller, TRAILS Area Editor (Sexuality and Sex and Gender)



Greg Kordismeier, TRAILS Area Editor (Emotions and Socialization)



Kerry Greer, TRAILS Area Editor (Internship/Service Learning)



Julie A. Pelton, TRAILS Editor (formerly Area Editor for Theory, Knowledge, Science)

We are lucky to have so many opportunities to support teaching and learning in our discipline. Whether you present a teaching innovation at a sociology conference, serve as an officer/council member for the ASA Section on Teaching and Learning, or support the Pre-Conference Workshop on teaching, you know the benefits that come from being part of a network of passionate teachers. We think that same sense of belonging comes with being a part of ASA’s TRAILS: The Teaching Resources and Innovations Library in Sociology. What sets working for TRAILS apart is that we all get to support the excellent teaching you all do directly. We thought you might like to know what it is like to be a TRAILS Area Editor! So here is a bit about our adventures in supporting teaching and learning through our work with TRAILS...

Being an Area Editor is about Support...Kerry Greer

Prior to becoming an Area Editor, I used TRAILS as an instructor because it reinvigorates my courses, helps me think through my own

pedagogical approach, and best of all, is always available, easily searchable, and well curated. When the opportunity arose last summer to serve as an area editor for “Internships and Service Learning,” I leaped at the chance! This is the area of teaching that I am most interested, have struggled the most to “get right,” and felt I could offer the most support to fellow faculty. I have been fortunate to work at several universities that support service learning, a rarity in higher education. My current position at the University of British Columbia allows me professional time and space to develop resources to support student learning through service learning and internships. The university supports initiatives that help students connect their undergraduate learning to the labour market. My favourite way to do this is by providing students with a foot in the door at local organizations and businesses. My training at Indiana University as a Service Learning Fellow helps guide my understanding of the different ways service learning can support the learning outcomes of a sociology classroom. I hope the support I have received will allow me to do the same for others who want to submit their best classroom materials for supporting student learning through service learning and internships!

Being an Area Editor is Transformative...Greg Kordsmeier

My experiences with TRAILS have grown and changed as I have grown and changed as an instructor. Like others, I began using TRAILS as a resource when preparing a new course or when I was struggling to teach a topic in a new and engaging. As I began to develop my own activities and assessments, inspired by what I had discovered, I submitted them to TRAILS and was fortunate enough to have them published. I found that working with an area editor helped me clarify my thinking and improve the activity as I used it in future iterations of the class. Like Kerry, I jumped at the chance to pay back an organization that has given me so much. As an area editor, I love seeing all of the new and innovative ways my colleagues around the country support and encourage student

learning in sociology. It has also sharpened my own critical eye when it comes to making sure that I have aligned all aspects of my teaching to my teaching goals. In addition, TRAILS is more than just a great static resource for teaching: I have really enjoyed actively supporting teaching as a TRAILS webinar presenter and hosting a TRAILS workshop at a regional association meeting. The best part of being a part of TRAILS has been meeting my colleagues from diverse institutions all committed to the best in teaching sociology.

Being an Area Editor is Energizing...Andrea Miller

Like me, no doubt many of you remember being giddy to attend the annual ASA meetings because it was a chance to get your hands on the newest paper copies of “Teaching Syllabus and Activities” guides. These invaluable resources were the first resources in TRAILS and I was one of the first area editors—an associate-type editor who uses their area of expertise to help review submissions to the database. In my case, I am the area editor of “Sex and Gender” and Sexuality” so I routinely review those precious syllabi and teaching resources that many of use in our everyday teaching. I am also fortunate to have what many might call “historical knowledge” of TRAILS as I was one of the first area editors to delve into starting TRAILS after the retirement of the paper-teaching guides. After almost a decade of working alongside other area editors I still feel the same heightened sensation when a new activity or syllabus arrives in my inbox from the TRAILS editor. Not only do I perform the work of reviewing the resource and making comments to the submitter, but I have first-hand knowledge of what some of the most enthusiastic scholars are doing in their field. It is no secret to my colleagues that after I review a resource I oftentimes use it in the classroom days after it has been published in TRAILS!

Inspired to work with us to support teaching and learning in sociology as an Area Editor? Area Editors serve a three-year term

reviewing submissions to a subject area(s) corresponding with their research and teaching expertise. The call for area editor applications usually appears in the summer issue of Footnotes and includes a list of subject areas for which we are seeking applicants. Applications are reviewed early in the fall and new area editor terms begin January 1.

Announcements

Check Out the 2018 Section Sessions

The ASA Section on Teaching and Learning is pleased to announce our 2018 sessions. Our section day is Monday August 13, 2018 and we have a wide range of experiences available for all attendees. Check out the paper sessions on the newest Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in sociology. Attend an interactive workshop on the science of learning and see how you can increase your impact beginning the first day of class. Engage with an informative expert panel on how your campus can implement the recommendations made in the new ASA departmental resource, “Changing Landscape of Higher Education: Curriculum, Careers, and Online Learning”. Be challenged in the lively roundtable conversations on empowerment, identity, ideology, and more. Be inspired by the Mauksch address “Service Sociology for a Better World” presented by the 2017 Mauksch Award recipient Meg W. Karraker. And lastly, become connected and find your path through our mentoring roundtable sessions. There is something for everyone whether you are just finishing graduate school or looking for new ways to celebrate our discipline in the ever-changing landscape of higher education. Plan to stay through Monday night and keep the conversation going at the joint reception with AKD... don’t miss out!

If you Teach, You Belong.

Paper Session: New Research in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Paper 1: *Shaping the College Classroom Through Syllabi*

Paper 2: *Contextualizing Developmental Education in Introduction to Sociology Courses:*

Impacts on Community College Students’ Sociological Imaginations

Paper 3: *Does Participation in a Discussion Board Participation Promote Learning Outcomes?: An online Research Methods Course*

Paper 4: *Do “Days of Service” Meet Institutional Service-Learning Goals? Assessing Outcomes of the MLK Day of Service*

Paper 5: *Teaching Whiteness in the Trump Era*

Mauksch Address:

“Service Sociology for a Better World” by Meg W. Karraker

Interactive Workshop:

“The Science of Learning and Sociology: Foundations and Strategies for Improved Learning Workshop”

As sociologists we tend to focus on the socially constructed nature of knowledge and the social aspects of learning at the expense of the related physiology. This interactive teaching workshop will provide an overview of the science of learning and help attendees apply this information to common learning challenges in sociology classes. We will explore questions such as “How does the brain learn?” “What is the role of practice in the learning process?” “How can I help students ‘unlearn’ errors in their understanding?” “How can I help my students develop empathy and resists stereotyping?” “How can I enhance the impact of the social aspects of learning and knowledge formation in my classes?”

Panel:

“The Sociology Major in the Changing Landscape of Higher Education: Curriculum, Careers, and Online Learning”

Panelists will discuss ways in which departments can use the insights and recommendations made in the new resource “The Sociology Major in the Changing Landscape of Higher Education: Curriculum, Careers, and Online Learning” in a variety of institutional contexts.

SOTL Roundtables:

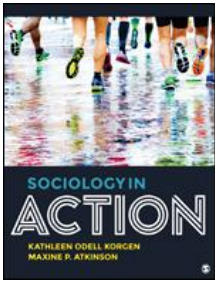
Empowering Ideas in Teaching and Learning
Racial Identity and Ideology in the Classroom

Mentoring Roundtables:

Roundtable 1 – Teaching at a Community College
Roundtable 2 – Teaching at a Liberal Arts - 4 year Institutions
Roundtable 3 – Comprehensive Institutions
Roundtable 4 – Teaching at Universities and Research Institutions
Roundtable 5 – Teaching Focused Positions at Research Institutions, Libraries & Data Centers, and Post Doctorates

TEXTBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT

If you teach an introductory sociology course, you will want to check out this new active-learning centered textbook! **Sociology in Action** helps your students *learn* sociology by *doing* sociology.



Kathleen Odell Korgen -
William Paterson University

Maxine P. Atkinson - North
Carolina State University

Sociology in Action will inspire your students to *do* sociology through real-world activities designed to increase learning, retention, and engagement with course material. This innovative new text immerses students in an active learning experience that emphasizes hands-on work, application, and learning by example. Each chapter explains sociology's key concepts and theories and pairs that foundational coverage with a series of carefully developed learning activities and thought-provoking questions. The comprehensive Activity Guide that accompanies the text provides everything you need to assign, carry out, and assess the activities that will best engage your students, fit the format of your course, and meet your course goals.

You can learn more about **Sociology in Action** and request a review copy at

<https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/sociology-in-action/book249345>

ASA Teaching and Learning Pre-Conference

This year's topic is...

Using Technology to Improve our Teaching: From online and hybrid classes to Learning Management Systems and email, technology has become a key component of how we teach. But how can we know which technologies to adopt? And how can we use technology most effectively?

Applications for the Pre-Conference Open APRIL 9th, 2018...STAY TUNED FOR MORE!

CONFERENCE

The Association for Humanist Sociology (AHS) invites submissions for its Annual Meeting, November 8-11, 2018, at Wayne State McGregor Memorial Conference Center.

The Association for Humanist Sociology is a community of sociologists, educators, scholars, and activists who share a commitment to using sociology to promote peace, equality, and social justice.

This year's theme set by President David G. Embrick is "Sociology for Whom? Real Conversations and Critical Engagements in Amerikkka." This meeting calls for us to address: 1) how to engage and commit to make all sociology public sociology; and 2) how to best address and engage in research, dialogue, and action regarding inequalities and the intersections of inequalities in our society, our institutions, and amongst ourselves. The conference also features two mini-conferences on "Environmental Inequality" and "Immigration in the U.S." For more information, please visit <https://www.humanist-sociology.org/2018-meeting.html> or email AHSDetroit2018@gmail.com Deadline for submissions is June 15, 2018.