TEACHING SOCIOLOGY

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Teaching Sociology publishes several types of papers. The basic distinction is between articles and notes. Generally, articles are longer than notes, more analytical, contain an extensive literature review and data analysis. Notes are shorter (usually 15 pages or less), contain a shorter literature review, and present and assess a teaching technique. The distinction reflects the dual purposes of the journal: 1) to provide a forum for analyzing the teaching of sociology, and 2) as a forum for the exchange of specific teaching ideas.

Articles are evaluated using some combination of the following criteria:
1. How useful and original are the ideas presented?
2. How thoroughly does the author consider implications for the teaching of sociology?
3. How well developed is the basic analytical point?
4. Is there sociological theory and/or analysis?
5. How thoroughly and accurately does the author ground the paper in the literature?
    • Are there articles in *Teaching Sociology* that the author should cite?
    • Does the paper tie into the larger literature on pedagogy?
6. How extensively does the author extend previous ideas and bring some intellectual closure to the topic?
7. In an empirical study, how sound is the methodology and how accurately do the presented results reflect the data? If applicable, how is student success measured and is there evidence that demonstrates that learning outcomes were achieved?
8. How well written is the paper?
    • How well integrated is the paper?
    • How well organized is the paper?

Notes are evaluated using some combination of the following criteria:
1. How useful, original, and transferable is the technique, strategy, or idea?
    • Does the paper discuss the types of classes and institutions where the technique can be used?
2. How cogently are the ideas and implications presented?
3. Is the description sufficiently detailed so a reader could easily employ it?
4. Does the paper say more than "I tried this and I liked it"?
5. Is there a brief literature review?
6. Does the author address potential difficulties with the technique and suggest possible solutions?
7. Is qualitative or quantitative outcome data reported?
8. How well written is the paper?
    • How well integrated is the paper?
    • How well organized is the paper?

GUIDELINES FOR PAPERS SUBMITTED TO *TEACHING SOCIOLOGY* FOR THE CONVERSATION SECTION

Teaching Sociology publishes brief comments, arguments, conversations, interviews, and responses related to a wide variety of issues in teaching sociology. The purpose of the Conversation section is to stimulate lively, thoughtful, topical, and controversial discussion. The Conversation section serves as a forum for an on-going exchange of ideas, arguments, responses, and commentary on issues that present the teacher of sociology with formidable challenges, dilemmas, and problems. Submissions to the Conversation section are refereed.

Conversations are evaluated using some combination of the following criteria:
1. How useful and original are the author's ideas, arguments, and/or commentary?
2. How relevant are the author's ideas, arguments, and/or commentary to issues in teaching sociology?
3. How well do the author's ideas and arguments contribute to an on-going dialogue on issues and dilemmas related to teaching sociology?
4. How thoroughly does the author consider implications for the teaching of sociology?
5. How cogently are the ideas and implications presented?
6. How well developed is the author's basic point/argument?
7. How well written is the paper?
    • How well integrated is the paper?
    • How well organized is the paper?

APPLICATION PAPERS IN *TEACHING SOCIOLOGY*

Teaching Sociology occasionally publishes applications of current research. The purpose of application papers is to make sociological research more accessible to undergraduate students by providing instructors with pedagogical tools for incorporating current research in their undergraduate courses. Application papers present learning activities, discussion questions, and other student-centered learning techniques that can be used in a variety of undergraduate courses. Applications are solicited by the editor.

Revised: August 22, 2007

CALL FOR PAPERS

CALL FOR PAPERS
SPECIAL ISSUE OF *TEACHING SOCIOLOGY*

From the Outside Looking In:
Applying Sociological Insights to the College Classroom

As sociologists, we exercise our sociological imaginations to analyze many different aspects of social life. Yet, we often forget that the very work that we do as college teachers, should also be sociologically examined. In this special issue, we are looking for sociologists to turn the sociological analysis inwards—to explore our teaching, our students' learning, and the physical space that unites us. We invite submissions of reflective essays as well as empirical articles that apply a sociological perspective to examine the social organization and behaviors of the college classroom. This issue will facilitate the development of an empirical and reflective agenda to explore the sociology of the classroom. Submissions should be sent to Liz Grauerholz, Editor, and Maxine P. Atkinson, Guest Editor, *Teaching Sociology*, Department of Sociology, University of Central Florida, Howard Phillips Hall 403, Orlando, FL 32816-1360. Questions can be directed to the editor or guest editor at grauer@mail.ucf.edu or Maxine_Atkinson@ncsu.edu. The deadline for submissions is October 1, 2008.

Correction: In the April 2008 issue of *Teaching Sociology* (Volume 36, Issue 2), an incorrect phone number was given for the video *What Makes Me White?* We apologize for the error. The correct contact information is: phone: (617) 522-3294; e-mail: amsproductions@earthlink.net; Web: http://whatmakesmewhite.com.

ARTICLES

THE ETHICS OF OBSERVING: CONFRONTING
THE HARM OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING*

In this article I explore the ethical terrain of experiential learning activities drawing on my experiences leading college students on field trips into criminal justice settings. Though there are numerous educational benefits to adopting experiential learning activities, the rewards must be evaluated in light of the potential harms to nonstudent participants. Student observations of criminal justice settings can reinforce common stereotypes of prisoners as scary and dangerous while reifying the legitimacy of state power exercised through agents of social control. More broadly, experiential learning activities can also highlight the shame and embarrassment of subordinate groups when such activities devolve into voyeuristic spectacles of human misery. In light of these potential harms to nonstudent groups, this article proposes guiding questions for educators to address in designing experiential activities. These questions draw attention to the following issues: the vulnerability of participants, the relative social power of nonstudent participants, whether participation is truly voluntary, the accessibility of the setting to outside observers, group size, benefits to nonstudent participants, duration of activity, protection of confidentiality, the role of students in the activity, and the curricular focus of the experience.

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AS EDUCATORS WE ARE ENTHUSIASTIC about creative learning strategies. Yet we have avoided a serious discussion of the impact our students have on the groups they are asked to observe. Harm to those observed has been underexplored in the experiential learning literature. Missing is any framework that might assist instructors in evaluating the ethics of experiential learning activities.

Experiential learning is a powerful pedagogical tool. There is a great body of literature which has documented the numerous benefits to student learning. Most of the

ethical discussion focuses on potential harm to student participants (Grauerholz and Coenhaver 1994; Martin 2000) and the perpetuation of stereotypes (Grant et al. 1981; Hollis 2004; Nurse and Krain 2006; Pompa 2002).

Experiential learning that involves vulnerable populations deserves greater scrutiny from educators. There is evidence that unstructured experiential learning, specifically service learning, can reinforce the belief that social problems are a result of personal troubles rather than structural or institutional conditions (Hollis 2004). Students observing court proceedings of a teenager facing a long prison sentence subject the teen to another layer of voyeuristic punishment. The wrongdoings of the teenager become "dramatized" (Tannenbaum 1938:71) in this status degradation ceremony (Garfinkel 1956). Observers' reactions may reinforce the teenager's deviant status (Nurse and Krain 2006) by facilitating the labeling of the teenager as delinquent

(Becker 1963; Lemert 1951).

In this article I explore the issue of potential harm to nonstudents who are the focus of experiential learning activities. I use my experiences leading college undergraduate criminology students into criminal justice settings as a case example of the ethical issues that can arise when we take students out of the classroom and into the outside world. I propose a framework that can be used to assess and secure the ethical terrain of experiential learning. I draw from my observations, class discussions, written student responses, and examples and analyses of others to develop a set of key points to consider: the vulnerability of participants, the relative social power of student and nonstudent participants, whether participation is truly voluntary, the accessibility of the setting to outside observers, group size, benefits to nonstudent participants, duration of activity, protection of confidentiality, the role of students in the activity, and the curricular focus of the experience. I also suggest that discussions with key stakeholders, student pre-activity preparation and post-activity processing can help instructors construct valuable and ethical experiential learning opportunities.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND THE FIELD TRIP

Though any teaching activity that incorporates a "hands-on" experience can be considered experiential in nature (Association for Experiential Education 2007), a common feature of experiential learning pedagogy is that it provides students with practical and reflective experiences that facilitate observation of and reflection on classroom topics. Wurdinger (2005) further defines experiential learning as "a reactive process in which learning occurs by reflecting on previous experiences" (p. 8).

Experiential learning includes a wide variety of pedagogical approaches. Some of these include: community service learning (Astin and Sax 1998; Astin, Sax, and Avalos 1999; Camacho 2004; Lemieux and Allen 2007; Pompa 2002), "breaching" or

norm violations (Bordt 2001), autobiographical journals (Grauerholz and Copenhaver 1994), and field trips (Boyle 1995; Chaichian 1989; Grant et al. 1981; Puffer 1994; Scarce 1997; Schwartz 1992; Wright 1987).

Field trips can facilitate critical analysis and understanding of the social world by providing students applied contexts in which they can observe and even experience social phenomena that they may traditionally only be familiar with through third-person accounts. Field trips promote long-term knowledge retention (Farmer, Knapp, and Benton 2007) and a way of "cementing a conceptual bridge" to the core curriculum (Grant et al. 1981:18). Students participating in the Discovery Program described by Greenberg (1989) lauded the "authenticity" of interviewing jail inmates and incarcerated youth (p. 335). Callaghan (2005) described how her students who observed family court were better able to differentiate between the reality versus the ideal of family law. Wright (1987) notes that comparative tours of men's and women's prisons can effectively illuminate the "frequently sexist assumptions which underlie rehabilitation and vocational programs in prisons" (p. 97). The teaching literature is resplendent with examples of the educational benefits of field trips, and the evidence is compelling.

One of the virtues of the field-trip experience is that it encourages one to view the lives of others in comparison to one's own life. This reflexivity can become problematic, however, when students fail to break the bonds of stereotypes that reinforce existing power structures. As noted by Scarce (1997), "social experiences are not [necessarily] *sociological* experiences," and students must be pushed to develop "a deeper understanding of the deceptive surface of social life with which all students are familiar" (p. 224).

INSIGHTS AND TENSIONS: OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS FROM THE FIELD

My concern for harm to nonstudents who

are connected to experiential learning activities has emerged from my own experiences using field trips in a juvenile delinquency course and two semesters of a criminology course. Though the issues that I discuss are related to criminal justice settings, many of the concerns raised are relevant to other settings. Experiential learning that brings students in contact with mental health and nursing home facilities, undocumented workers, the homeless, those receiving public assistance, religious settings, among a multitude of others, may generate unnecessary harm to nonstudent participants. Therefore, the framework that I develop for assessing potential harm to nonstudent groups can be used to analyze other types of experiential learning activities as well.

I planned and accompanied students on tours of juvenile facilities. Students in the Criminology course went on a five-hour tour of Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, California, and a visit to the local county jail. Students also conducted individual observations of juvenile and adult court.

The field trips were scheduled at points in the semester that ensured that students were familiar with the concepts explored. Depending on class size, we traveled to the field sites in university vans or buses. The shared time and space gave us the opportunity both before and after to talk about the experience. I asked students to write both a summary and critique of their observations. Students also compared their observations with lecture and readings. As the prison and jail tours were disturbing for some students, writing assignments served a cathartic function (Grauerholz and Copenhaver 1994).

It was during the first week of teaching the Juvenile Delinquency class that my students and I began to reflect on the ethical issues inherent in taking them to such places. One of my students had asked whether the incarcerated youth were aware that we would be visiting the juvenile hall. I then encouraged my students to consider whether the class could visit juvenile justice settings without impacting the groups or processes observed. We discussed the po-

tential impact of our "gaze" on boys and girls being held in the juvenile hall. Fundamentally, the students were concerned that the "spectacle" of touring the facilities and programs might constitute some sort of Hawthorne effect (Babbie 2004) in the setting. It may be difficult to evaluate the "authenticity" of the incarcerated youth and whether our presence might change their behavior or of the correctional staff. In this early discussion, student concern was more about the "validity" of observation than a concern for the observed; but it developed into a discussion of power and subject vulnerability. We explored different strategies to minimize our impact on the lives of the youth.

The resolution of our discussion was that the youth should be informed of our upcoming visit and, where possible, given the option of not being present. I asked the juvenile hall director as well as other facility directors to inform residents of our upcoming visit. Students also attended juvenile court so I sought permission from the juvenile court judge for students to be present during proceedings.[1] I also requested that the judge announce prior to each hearing the presence of student observers in the courtroom and determine if there were any objections. In retrospect, highlighting their presence may have added to the potential negative impact of student observers. We were making gross assumptions about power and the exercise of free will by the institutionalized.

In institutional settings, power is routinely employed to exercise control over subordinate groups. Institutionalized populations who refuse to participate in university-sponsored events may face reprisals by institutional staff. After all, prisons, jails, mental institutions, and homeless shelters have a vested interest in maintaining a positive relationship with universities and the

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[1]Public access to juvenile court proceedings varies by state. Unless a juvenile has been charged as an adult, juvenile court proceedings are closed to the general public in California (Cal. R. Ct. 5.53[a] & [b]).

broader communities that support their existence. Therefore, inmates who refuse to speak with visitors touring a prison may be labeled by guards and even other inmates as troublemakers. For such inmates, reprisals may come in the form of harassment and potential exclusion from inmate groups. Likewise, guards and other prison staff may be less supportive of responding to otherwise routine inmate needs or worse, their bid for parole. Similar threats of reprisals for refusing to participate in student tours may also face clients of homeless shelters (who want to be viewed favorably by service providers) and mental hospital patients (where nonconformity is viewed as indicative of illness). Yet these concerns also apply to other types of social settings where one group maintains control over another social group. This might include work, family, religious, and government settings. In short, in social settings where one group maintains some form of control over another, there may be consequences for refusing to "volunteer" to participate in university-sponsored experiential activities.

Based on end-of-term course evaluations, the tours and courtroom observations proved to be valuable learning experiences for my students. For most of the students this was the first time any of them had ever stepped foot into a correctional institution or courtroom setting. Students reflected on the differences between what they observed in juvenile court and popular culture representations of juvenile justice (Callaghan 2005; Scarce 1997). In some ways I felt that I succeed in pushing my students to challenge common myths of "blind justice" and a benevolent judicial process. I felt that the structure of the class and the small class size (there were nine students) contributed to providing students the opportunity to process and reflect on their observations.

Following my positive experience using field trips in Juvenile Delinquency, I was looking forward to incorporating such experiential methods into a Criminology course I would be teaching the subsequent semester. I arranged for my class to visit the local county jail, observe criminal court proceedings, and spend the afternoon at Pelican Bay State Prison. Similar to the Juvenile Delinquency course, I prepared my students by exploring in readings and lecture such ideas as the militarization of the correctional system (Parenti 1999) and how it is used to manage the underclass (Irwin 1985, 2005). The curricular focus of the tours was to provide students with concrete examples of the disconnect between the rhetoric and reality of correctional institutions.

Despite similar preparations as I had with my earlier group of nine students, this second trip with 35 students did not go as well. Though we were touring an adult jail rather than juvenile hall, the larger group size seemed to draw more attention to the students and perhaps made them more brazen in their behavior. As we stood outside a glassed housing area, I observed a group of my students pointing and laughing at inmates on the other side of the glass. I immediately pulled them aside and reminded them "we are not in a zoo" and to "please show some respect" to the inmates. While I was not able to determine whether inmates were actually offended, the behavior of the students was clearly inappropriate.

I discussed this incident with my students immediately following the tour. The class identified two key assumptions underlying the behavior of their classmates during the tour. First there is the stereotype that jail inmates are all equally guilty of a criminal offense, which makes them "different" from conventional society and therefore worthy of mockery. During our discussion one of my students shared with the class that he saw one of the jail inmates a few days after the tour wearing a backpack and walking across the university campus. This student suggested that the inmate was perhaps also a student. This observation helped support my contention that there is often a fine line between the inmate and student life; one must simply be caught and then the two-way glass becomes a one-way mirror.

The class also identified nested in the actions of their classmates the assumption

that touring a correctional institution consists of the same behavioral expectations as visiting a zoo. In both settings it is appropriate to gawk at the wild creatures held in captivity as objects of curiosity. I then asked my students to critically evaluate the similarities and differences between a jail tour and a visit to the zoo. Institutions are generally private settings yet many are often opened for controlled public observation. Others have expressed concern about the "zoo phenomenon" (Grant et al. 1981:23) of passive student observers reinforcing stereotypes of the populations being observed. Popular culture provides numerous examples of human beings placed on display as spectacle (e.g., *Planet of the Apes,* Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and more recently, the immense popularity of a variety of forms of reality television programming that place other people's lives on display). Yet the theatrical production involved in Hollywood may desensitize us to the inhumanity of The Panopticon (Bentham [1789] 1970) of institutional life. While incarceration and the loss of freedom are the basis of court-mandated punishment, the objectification of inmates adds another layer of extra-legal punishment in the form of shame and embarrassment.

Some settings increase the potential for shame and the stigmatization of those observed. This is especially true in contexts where targets of observation are especially vulnerable to discreditable stigmas that become spoiled (Goffman 1963) only when discovered by "normal" student observers. Paradoxically, Wright (1987) suggested "other potential tour sites which illustrate the stigmatization of women as criminals and crime victims include adult bookstores, pornographic movie theaters, rape crisis centers, and battered women's shelters" (p. 97). At some point, the line between academically grounded learning and hedonistic voyeurism can become blurred and potentially damaging. Others (Hodgson 2001) have reflected on the challenge of moving students placed in a policing context from voyeurs to engaging in qualitative field observations. Aside from the academic rigor of field work, what distinguishes it from its folk level cousin, voyeurism?

We might also consider a zoo to share many of the same characteristics of a total institution (Goffman 1961) that a jail possesses. Most all aspects of the daily life of jail and zoo inmates are controlled by their captors for the benefit of others. Jail and zoo inmates alike must eat, sleep, socialize, groom themselves, relieve themselves, and exercise according to the rules, physical restrictions, and idiosyncratic policies of their respective captive institutions. Unlike zoos, jails and prisons generally have never been opened up to the curious gaze of the public. If anything, outside access to prisons and jails has become tightly restricted (Gest 2001). In fact, my attempt to organize a repeat jail tour the next time I taught Criminology was rebuffed by the jail administration who claimed that "9/11 security concerns" precluded them from allowing my students to view the inside of the jail.

Written student reflections on both the jail and prison tours confirmed that students were very cognizant of how invasive these tours might be as well as their potential harm to inmates. Students shared that they were "very saddened" by the "repulsive behavior of a select few of my fellow classmates," "ashamed peering at them through the window like we were at the zoo," and feeling "kind of rude, looking at the inmates as if they were rats in a cage."

Some students were uncomfortable with the voyeuristic quality of the experience. Reflecting on a later tour of a prison, a female student felt as if we were "disrespecting the inmates by viewing their lives in prisons where they can never leave." Students clearly understood that the presence of inmates in this context was not voluntary. Another student speculated that prison inmates were likely bothered by the presence of students which made him realize that:

These guys weren't on display, this is their

life. These people live here and I asked my-self, "would I like someone coming into my house on a tour?" That is when I realized that I needed to treat these people with respect, as I would like to be treated, if someone came and visited my house.

The prison tour led this student to have an epiphany in which he came to reevaluate his previous perception of inmates as undeserv-ing of equal treatment.

Students were implicitly concerned with how our tour of the jail and prison violated the privacy of inmates. In fact, some stu-dents shared that they were uncomfortable passing by a housing area or cell because they might be invading the limited privacy of inmates. One student reflected that he:

. . . felt terrible about invading his pri-vacy. This made me think how basic rights to privacy are limited in prison. As a tour group we can see the inmates and talk to them. I felt a little awkward as if I was invading someone's home.

Though there is no legal expectation of pri-vacy in prison settings (see 104 S. Ct. 3194 1984), the earlier shaming function of stocks and pillories has symbolically been brought inside the walls of the prison as the presence of student observers highlight the stigma of the incarcerated.

Later in the semester I accompanied my students on a tour of Pelican Bay State Prison. At the start of both tours, the prison public information officer provided the class with an overview of what to expect touring the prison as well as some background in-formation on the facility. All dimensions of the prison tour, though negotiated in ad-vance, were carefully choreographed by the prison to present very specific images of inmates as scary and dangerous, guards as benevolent caregivers, prison culture as sophisticated yet savage, and the institu-tional purpose as aligned with the public interest of protecting public safety at all costs.

The sense of danger was generally con-structed through several means. We were shown a news video of a prison gang battle on the prison yard in which the brutality of human beings was displayed in graphic de-tail on a television screen. Our prison guides also opened a cabinet containing a collection of prisoner-made weapons confis-cated from inmates. The violent purpose of the instruments aside, many students later commented on the ingenuity, resourceful-ness, and creativity of inmates who were able to clandestinely manufacture such weapons. Nevertheless, this display of weaponry reinforced the prison narrative of inmate as brutal and relentless in his desire to inflict harm on other inmates and/or guards. Students responded to this display in a variety of ways. One student was clearly impressed with the display of contra-band: "I enjoyed seeing all the weapons made in prison. I knew they were made, but I had no clue how big some of them are." Finally, the unpredictability of the prison environment and dangerousness of the in-mates was reinforced when we were in-structed on how to respond to alarms sound-ing in different areas of the prison as this was "likely to occur."

The skewed representation of prisoners and prison life is a drawback to prison tours organized by prison administration. One strategy is to simply avoid tours that are exclusively planned and given by institu-tional staff. Alternatively, inmates (or cli-ents, patients, residents in other settings) can be recruited by the teacher to participate in the planning of a tour and potentially serve as guides. How receptive prison ad-ministrators would be to such an arrange-ment will likely vary by agency, security level of inmates, and prior experiences that the correctional agency has had with the academic community. Finally, as should be the case with any sort of field trip experi-ence, students should be sensitized in ad-vance to the various interests that actors in a given social setting might have in maintain-ing their own particular construction of re-ality. Hence, prison guards have a vested interest in representing inmates as violent and dangerous since it reinforces the ideol-

ogy of the carceral state.

During the tour, my students experienced first-hand the panic and related hysteria associated with a prison alarm. While we were circumventing the main exercise yard, alarms began blaring and red sirens were illuminated above several doorways. Sharp-shooters in the watchtowers looked as if they were taking aim on the yard as our guides yelled at us to get up against the wall. Nearby inmates seemed to hit the ground flat as if this were part of their daily routine. We were soon given the "all clear," and my students rather reluctantly resumed the tour. The timing of the alarm was rather serendipitous as it provided students with the first-hand experience of the unpredictability of prison and the potential for danger. Although we were later told it was a false alarm, I overheard a guard commenting to one of our guides that it "was great timing" that the group got to experience the alarm. Whether the alarm was intentionally activated for us, it certainly fit nicely into the well orchestrated presentation of the brutality and danger of prisons. If the alarm was intentionally sounded, the presence of my students in the prison was anything but beneficial to the inmates.

My students were clearly traumatized by the alarm incident. A large and muscular student athlete reflected on his reaction to the alarm sounding as the group traversed the yard:

> My heart started to beat and I ran against the wall. The guard told us that it was a siren to let other guards know that there was a problem on the yard. After the alarm went off, about seventeen other guards came out.

Still another student indicated that the alarm sounding was the only time during the tour that he "felt scared or unsafe," "this was a little scary, *but it added to the experience* (italics added)," suggesting that the alarm functioned as a "soundtrack" for the visual experience of the prison tour. Nevertheless, she candidly shared the fear she felt throughout the prison tour: "I was really shaking the entire time we were there" and

paradoxically, she concluded that "instead of me feeling like I was touring the prison, it felt like the prison was touring me." One student later commented that she simply felt "we were too interactive with convicted felons." Clearly the prison tour was effective at achieving its institutional purpose.

Students had the opportunity to "debrief" (Schwartz 1992) from the tour during the return drive home from the prison. While many appeared to be exhausted from the experience—we were inside the prison for five hours—others used the opportunity to ask questions and share observations. This also gave me the opportunity to help students contextualize the fears that they openly shared. Admittedly, I too was concerned about the safety of my students. While some prisoners act scary and dangerous in order to survive in prison, we speculated as to whether other prisoners may act threatening only when student tours come through (see Finckenhauer and Gavin 1999). We also considered whether the violence of some prisoners may be in reaction to the conditions imposed on them by the prison. Others might use this as an opportunity to engage the methodological problems associated with identifying which scenario is correct: inmates are scary and dangerous, they are made scary and dangerous as a survival mechanism, or they are portrayed that way by those in positions of power to legitimize their position and authority. Students "saw" how prisons have an investment in perpetuating the myth of inmates as scary and dangerous and we were able to connect what we observed—and experienced—to course readings that critically examined how prisons are socially constructed as unpredictable and prisoners as violent and dangerous (Irwin 2005; Parenti 1999). We also revisited earlier discussions of how the public perception of the distribution of risk for violent victimization has been intentionally distorted to support politically driven crime control agendas (Best 1999). In this respect, what the students observed in criminal justice settings was integrated back into the general focus of

class discussions and readings.

My experiences taking students to the jail and prison provided plenty of material for me to consider in negotiating the ethical terrain of experiential learning. In hindsight, it was helpful for my students that we visited the prison toward the end of the semester so that we were able to ground the experience in readings and lecture material.[2] Nevertheless, there were things I would have done differently. I have subsequently abandoned the use of prison tours in my criminology course, but the ethical issues that emerged are certainly relevant to experiential methods more generally.

ASSESSING THE ETHICAL TERRAIN OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Instructors are the ethical guardians of their curriculum. Unlike the highly regulated world of formal research (ASA 1999), field trips and other experiential learning data escape review because the data is collected in an educational context and is not disseminated outside the classroom (see Federal Regulation 45 CFR 46.101[b]). These activities escape the litmus test of real research. The ASA's *Code of Ethics* (1999) and the National Education Association's *Code of Ethics of the Education Profession* (2007) are both silent on the protection of the nonacademic community during the educational process.[3]

Experiential learning settings are not altogether different in flavor, if not longevity and intent, than other types of fieldwork. Yet we are more complacent entering the field with students, rather than with digital recorders or survey questionnaires. We have denied the possibility of risk to subjects in the field.[4] Schwartz (1992) suggested that university oversight does not apply as long students "only *observe* the activity . . . and do not elicit information directly from human subjects" (p.335). Greenberg's (1989) students interviewed both adult and juvenile inmates who were "selected" for participation. Yet his writing did not consider that participation was compulsory rather than voluntary.[5] Scarce (1997) framed the issue of "concerns about the use of human subjects" under a subheader entitled "Administrative Roadblocks" (p. 224). These authors missed the opportunity to address another arena of ethics whose exploration would have benefited their students.

Though students might utilize human subjects for personal benefit (e.g., their own learning if not their personal and collective entertainment), the benefits to researchers extend beyond their individual career advancement to the enrichment of scholarly knowledge.[6] Yet there are moral and ethical similarities between these two activities. In response, some might argue that some sort of institutional oversight may be relevant for experiential learning activities. I propose that such a review process may present

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[2]A drawback to waiting until the end of the term is that the class does not have this common experience to which they can refer over the course of semester. An early trip also helps "break down the social barriers between students and instructor" (Scarce 1997:222).

[3]Though the NEA did take up this issue in a rather dated piece entitled "Ethics and Student Tours" (1969), the article was more concerned with ethical violations associated with educators affiliating themselves with or promoting commercial student tours, than it was to the potential harm to communities.

[4]Callaghan (2005) argued that Federal rules governing research with human subjects do not

apply since family court proceedings are open to the public and therefore considered public behavior.

[5]Greenberg (1989) did note that "no one is ever compelled or coerced into participating in the program" (p. 333). Nevertheless, a discussion of the broader ethical issues associated with students interviewing vulnerable populations would have provided an invaluable context in which to address whether participation by inmates was truly voluntary and what might be the potential harm to inmates participating in interviews and group discussions.

[6]Another important difference is that the "data" generated during experiential learning are "consumed in the process rather than preserved in a written record" (Byrne 2007).

an undue burden for educators already pressed in their responsibilities. Instead, the adoption of a framework for assessing ethics and subject responsibility is well overdue. Our professional associations should consider amending their codes of ethics to prohibit learning activities which may cause harm to nonstudent groups. Here I begin that discussion by offering the following set of guiding questions for assessing the ethics of experiential learning activities. It is no coincidence that many of the questions mirror those we ask ourselves with our own formal research.

1. Are vulnerable populations involved? Instructors should assess the vulnerability of the subjects that they ask their students to observe. An instructor has an obligation to protect the subject, which may include eliminating the observation altogether. Vulnerable populations are groups whose relative social, cultural, and economic power, whether ascribed or achieved, places them at a disadvantage in negotiating social relationships.

2. Is social power equally distributed in the setting? Some settings may be more obtrusive and generate discomfort for those observed. Instructors should consider whether social actors are present due to legal, medical, or economic contingencies, as well as the level of apparent stratification among actors within the setting. Do rigid hierarchical distinctions exist between groups (e.g., prison staff and inmates, doctors and patients, caregivers and nursing home residents, shelter staff, and homeless clients) in the setting? Martin (2000) suggests giving prior notice for visits not simply because it is polite, but "it allows people the dignity of being seen (or not being seen) on their own terms" (p. 201). The ability of people in a given social setting to shape how and if they will be seen by student visitors is of course conditioned by social forces of which an instructor may not be aware.

3. Are subjects participating voluntarily? Part of assuring voluntary participation includes assessing the likelihood that subjects have the power to refuse participation. As previously noted, total institutions (Goffman 1961) are intentionally organized such that maximum control of the many is monopolized by the few. Thus, in criminal justice, mental health, assisted living, and other institutional contexts, the exercise of power limits the possibility of voluntary participation.

In a criminal justice context, like other social settings, where the exercise of power and authority manifests itself in all areas of social life, how "freely" can inmates decline participating in a program involving outsiders? Are inmates who refuse to participate formally (through loss of privileges) or informally (through unfavorable treatment by guards) sanctioned? In these types of social settings, inmates, patients, residents, and clients have an interest in being on the best possible terms with those providing services.

Instructors might ask: Are decisions made *by* or *for* participating group members? Experiential activities should be organized with attention paid to ensuring the voluntary nature of the activity for both students and subjects. Careful assessment of the distribution of power among participants in the setting will help sensitize instructor and students to whether participants freely enter the activity. Instructors cannot change the balance of power in a social setting, yet they can choose to modify the activity so participation is more clearly voluntary. An instructor could draft a description of the proposed activity that would be given to potential participants in the setting. This description should include the same sort of disclosures contained in a common informed consent form. Yet what is critical is that potential participants come forward on their own as opposed to being selected by authority figures in the setting (e.g., shelter director, warden). Though some may still "volunteer" in order to secure favorable treatment by staff, this strategy resolves the problem of participants being "volunteered" by others. Field trips to institutional settings create a somewhat different dilemma since

"clients" (e.g., inmates, patients, or residents) become part of the physical landscape and it may be unrealistic to determine whether they choose to be observed.

When it is apparent that participants will be selected by institutional staff for "voluntary" participation, instructors should consider alternative populations or exercises. Family support groups for the incarcerated, homeless, or mentally ill can be contacted. LaRossa (1984) has used case studies as an alternative experiential method. For example, first person accounts of prison life written by prisoners (see, for example, Santos 2007) can provide a rich context against which abstract ideas can be applied. News publications written by prisoners *(Prison Legal News)* and the homeless *(Street Sheet)* can also be used.

4. How accessible is the setting to outside observers? Observations made in private settings where access might be restricted require greater scrutiny than those in public settings. People at festivals, commercial airports, shopping malls, bus-stops, art museums, farmers markets, and protest demonstrations can have few expectations of privacy. When access is provided, other settings occupy a gray area. For example, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings (Schwartz 1992) may have a policy of openness but may become more exclusive when there are fewer participants or they "are mainly members of the university community, motorcycle gangs, or any other subculture" (p. 334). Prisons restrict public access, yet the United States Supreme Court ruled in Hudson v. Palmer (104 S. Ct. 3194 1984) that "prisoners have no legitimate expectation of privacy." And while court proceedings are generally open to the public, ethics might encourage us to restore dignity by requesting permission from those observed.

5. How many students will be involved in the activity? The greater the number of students involved the greater the likelihood of making those observed uncomfortable. Large groups are not only logistically challenging to coordinate, but they call attention to themselves and their acts of observation.

This was the case with the prison tour of a maximum-security prison that I organized for 35 students. The sheer size of the group created a spectacle.

Field trips can be used with larger classes by creating smaller groups (Boyle 1995; Grant et al. 1981; McPhail 2002) or making it a "self-guided tour" (Nichols et al. 2004; Puffer 1994). For example, Grant et al. (1981) created day-long tours of Detroit for 500 undergraduates enrolled in an introductory sociology course. Students were driven through preselected neighborhoods in 14-person vans in order to minimize neighborhood impact and encourage student participation in community interactions with "articulate neighborhood spokespersons" (Grant et al. 1981:23). Boyle (1995) instructed her students to visit a local shopping mall in groups of five or six, while McPhail (2002) broke his class into three groups of 14 students that toured a Scottish prison on three separate days. Yet another strategy is to instruct students to ride a predetermined city bus route (Nichols et al. 2004) or attend religious services (Puffer 1994) on their own.

6. How will participating communities benefit? We should question the extent to which communities benefit from participating in experiential learning when they are excluded from conversations establishing the objectives of an activity. When coordinating student tours of a juvenile hall, jail, and Pelican Bay State Prison, I failed to solicit the input of institutional outsiders (e.g., service organizations and family support groups) when negotiating the tour objectives with the facility director and public information officers. Martin (2000) described the feeling of "voyeurism most of us feel when confronted with desperate hardship in a 'learning' capacity" and asked, "can we establish a mutually constructive relationship with those who contribute [to a learning experience]" (p. 199).

The instructor, students and key community stakeholders should identify the ways in which an activity could be organized to meet the needs of the community rather

than solely the intellectual curiosity of the students. This negotiation process must include seeking "the advice of local people, especially those who work with the community in question" (Martin 2000:200). It may be more difficult to identify key stakeholders when experiential activities include actors confined to institutional settings who lack the power and autonomy to be arbiters of their own destiny. The challenge then becomes identifying gatekeepers to the setting who are also trusted and respected within the institution.

Oppressed populations benefit indirectly when negative views of their group (e.g., prison inmates) are diminished. From my conversations and correspondence with California prison inmates, I have learned that prisoners seek greater access to the outside world in order to share their accounts of the pains of imprisonment. Prison settings in particular represent a secret world about which the general population is intentionally ill-informed (Gest 2001).

7. What will be the duration of the activity? Short-term experiential methods, while convenient and simple, run the danger of reinforcing stereotypes and amplifying a sense of voyeurism around the activity. Field trips can be expanded into long-term service learning projects (Camacho 2004; Martin 2000; Pompa 2002), but the benefits to students and subjects must be weighed against other questions raised in this section.

Longer-term experiential activities may help mitigate some of the potential harms identified in this paper. These activities may include internships or service learning projects in which our students, for example, work in an AIDS agency (Porter and Schwartz 1993). Semester long co-learning with a targeted group may also provide students "total immersion" (Pompa 2002:68) in a context that would be otherwise ethically problematic. For example, at Temple University college students and inmates attend a class held weekly in a local prison (Inside-Out Prison Exchange 2006). "The setting [then] serves as part of the context of

the learning" (Pompa 2002:67).

Pompa (2002) argues that "service" learning can become patronization within a context ruled by "hierarchical structures and patriarchal philosophies" (p. 68). In response, she has designed an experiential method that moves beyond "doing for" to "being with" and promotes mutuality in learning. Participants are pushed to leave behind traditional labels of each other and "glimpse into the other's humanity" (Pompa 2002:68). As they all share the status of "student," they build relationships based on reciprocity and mutuality in learning. In addition, the role of teacher is redefined to create a "liberatory" and transformative learning atmosphere in which *everyone* can "experience, examine and explore" (Pompa 2002:70).

8. How will confidentiality be maintained? The confidentiality of those being observed must be protected. Some instructors have incorporated a discussion of confidentiality into pre-field trip orientation activities (Greenberg 1989; Nurse and Krain 2006). Others noted how some field settings (such as Alcoholics Anonymous meetings) have established norms that are designed to protect the confidentiality of participants (Schwartz 1992). Yet much of the discussion of ethics and field trips is still framed as protecting students and the university.

Instructors should explore with their students the real consequences of violating confidentiality. Protection of confidentiality can be framed as an ethical and professional issue. Greenberg (1989) required his students to sign a contract governing their behavior during and following interviews that included a pledge to protect the confidentiality of "clients" by using pseudonyms. In addition, it could be understood within the expected guidelines of "student conduct" and violations connected to the related university sanctions. Drawing a comparison to behavioral expectations in the workplace can also reinforce why professionalism is important.

9. What will be the student role(s) in the setting? Depending upon the activity, stu-

dents might assume different roles in the setting. When Schwartz (1992) had her students observe AA meetings, she encouraged them to participate in extra-meeting activities such as getting refreshments, buying raffle tickets and cleaning up. In other settings, the students' role as observers may be unknown and announcing their presence as learners would be disruptive. For example, it was not necessary for Boyle (1995) to notify those in a shopping mall that they were being observed by her students. Students may also require additional preparation regarding the culture and norms in the setting. For example, students in criminal justice settings must be instructed on appropriate demeanor and behavior so as not to disrespect those being observed. These instructions might include not pointing at anything in a prison lest an inmate believe he or she is being singled out. Students should also avoid staring since it can be interpreted as a challenge or disrespectful in some settings.

On a practical side, instructors should anticipate the setting with students and discuss expectations for ethical action in a variety of scenarios. Everything from formulating questions (Puffer 1994; Scarce 1997) to appropriate times to write field notes (Greenberg 1989) might be discussed. The observation method will influence the visibility of the observer. Note taking may be far less invasive than using some sort of electronic recording device.

10. What will be the lens through which students view the setting? Instructors play a vital role in shaping the direction of a field experience. Beyond laying the logistical groundwork by coordinating schedules, transportation, and itineraries, instructors also must determine the specific learning objectives of an activity. These can be met by pre-experience theoretical and empirical instruction and readings, conscious selection of the voices representing a community and post-experience processes.

Instructors have an ethical obligation to prepare students both theoretically and practically for the learning activity. Both aspects contribute to the ethics of the experience.

While some have been concerned they might "pre-empt or restrict" how their students experience a particular activity (McPhail 2002:359), others have written about covering in advance key conceptual ideas such as social stratification and social class (Nichols et al. 2004; Scarce 1997) to provide the intellectual context for observations.

Instructors should carefully consider who the students will hear speaking for a community. In addition, they should make students aware of the social location of the portals through which they enter the field. In reflecting on a field experience in India, for example, Martin (2000) considered how field staff might have presented "too negative an image by focusing on the dysfunctional aspects of economy and culture" which can "underplay the role of other, equally important, socio-economic groups in modern India and might also inadvertently develop or reinforce negative representations of India" (p. 198). This is not to suggest that experiential learning activities must be designed to provide "equal time" to both the powerful and powerless. After all, sociology courses often focus on the sources of social injustice. Yet, Grant et al. (1981) sought to provide comparative perspectives on the social processes impacting neighborhoods by exposing students to a variety of different Detroit communities. Discussions with key stakeholders prior to the activity, pre-experience preparations for students and post-activity processing may all help mitigate potential problems.

Finally, the ethics of observation continues after the learning experience has ended. Instructors help students make sense of their observations, as they mediate student analyses. Post-activity discussions enhance student knowledge and enable "students to feel that they have reached a collective understanding . . . which is greater than any one person's understanding" (Schwartz 1992:335).

CONCLUSION

Field trips with criminology students have

often been concerned with issues of student safety. In this article I expanded the ethics of experiential learning: vulnerable groups become subjects of concern rather than objects of curiosity. I presented a framework for instructors to use in planning experiential learning activities that involve nonstudent groups. This framework is only the beginning of a long overdue conversation.

Experiential learning does not occur in a social vacuum. Instead, learning experiences are conditioned by the same structural forces that our students are seeking to observe. The "subjectivity" of the student experience must be understood as socially shaped by race, class, and gender hierarchies (Camacho 2004). Student perceptions of social problems are also linked to political socialization. It is within this context of structural inequality that we must sensitize ourselves to the ways in which experiential learning interfaces with social power and can become ethically problematic.

Our discipline must address the ethical issues raised in this discussion. Just as we have established safeguards for the protection of human research subjects, populations observed for classroom learning experiences must also be protected from the potential harms addressed here. I am not calling for a new layer of bureaucracy impeding the creative use of experiential learning as a pedagogical tool. My purpose instead is for sociologists to mitigate the potential negative impact their students might have on the populations they observe. This discussion can be used as a starting point for instructors evaluating the suitability of a particular learning activity. Yet it also identifies the ethical issues which challenge us to engage our students in a thoughtful pre-activity discussion of the potential consequences of our excursions into social settings. If we fail to adequately prepare our students for a jail tour —or any field setting for that matter— then they are likely to approach the setting as if they were spectators observing wild animals in a zoo.

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