TEACHING SOCIOLOGY
AN OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 38 ● NUMBER 2 ● APRIL 2010

ARTICLES
2009 Hans O. Mauksch Address: Where Are We and How Did We Get Here?
A Brief Examination of the Past, Present, and Future of the Teaching and Learning
Movement in Sociology
Jay R. Howard

Teaching Graduate and Undergraduate Research Methods: A Multipronged
Departmental Initiative
Sara Shostak, Jennifer Girouard, David Cunningham, and Wendy Cadge

Developing a Sociological Imagination by Doing Sociology: A Methods-based
Service-learning Course on Women and Immigration
Kimberly Huisman

A Constructive Controversy Approach to “Case Studies”
Sharon R. Bird and Karla A. Erickson

Walk Like a Man, Talk Like a Woman: Teaching the Social Construction of Gender
Dana Berkowitz, Namita N. Manohar, and Justine E. Tinkler

One Starfish at a Time: Using Fundamentals in Sociology to Rethink Impressions about
People Living with HIV/AIDS
Robin D. Moremen

TEACHING NOTES
Teaching Beginning Undergraduates How to Do an In-depth Interview: A Teaching Note
with 12 Handy Tips
Victoria Healey-Etten and Shane Sharp

BOOK REVIEWS

FILM REVIEW
The American Sociological Association acknowledges, with appreciation, the facilities and assistance provided by Valdosta State University.
Contents

Guidelines for Papers Submitted to Teaching Sociology

Articles

2009 Hans O. Mauksch Address: Where Are We and How Did We Get Here? A Brief Examination of the Past, Present, and Future of the Teaching and Learning Movement in Sociology 81
Jay R. Howard

Teaching Graduate and Undergraduate Research Methods: A Multipronged Departmental Initiative 93
Sara Shostak, Jennifer Girouard, David Cunningham, and Wendy Cadge

Developing a Sociological Imagination by Doing Sociology: A Methods-based Service-learning Course on Women and Immigration 106
Kimberly Huisman

A Constructive Controversy Approach to “Case Studies” 119
Sharon R. Bird and Karla A. Erickson

Walk Like a Man, Talk Like a Woman: Teaching the Social Construction of Gender 132
Dana Berkowitz, Namita N. Manohar, and Justine E. Tinkler

One Starfish at a Time: Using Fundamentals in Sociology to Rethink Impressions about People Living with HIV/AIDS 144
Robin D. Moremen

Call for Papers: Special Issue of Teaching Sociology on Assessment 156

Teaching Notes

Teaching Beginning Undergraduates How to Do an In-depth Interview: A Teaching Note with 12 Handy Tips 157
Victoria Healey-Etten and Shane Sharp
Book Reviews

Hate Crimes and Ethnoviolence: The History, Current Affairs, and Future of Discrimination in America. Howard J. Ehrlich 166
Valerie Callanan

Joseph De Angelis

Consensus Organizing: A Community Development Workbook. Mary L. Ohmer and Karen DeMasi 170
Gary Paul Green

Film Review

Beauty Mark: Body Image and the Race for Perfection. A She-Art Production 172
Carol Poll

Notice to Contributors
Teaching Sociology (TS) publishes articles, notes, applications, and reviews intended to be helpful to the discipline’s teachers. Articles range from experimental studies of teaching and learning to broad, synthetic essays on pedagogically important issues. The general intent is to share theoretically stimulating and practically useful information and advice for teachers. Formats include full-length articles, notes of 15 pages or less, review essays, classroom applications of current research, conversations, and film, video, and software reviews.

Communication about articles, notes, and conversations should be addressed to Kathleen Lowney, Editor, Teaching Sociology, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice, Valdosta State University, Valdosta, GA 31698-0060, e-mail: teachingsociology@valdosta.edu, voice: (229) 333-5487, fax: (229) 333-5492. Communications about reviews and review essays should be sent to Glenn Muschert, Deputy Editor, Teaching Sociology, Department of Sociology and Gerontology, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 45056-1879; voice: (513) 529-1812; fax: (513) 529-8525.

Teaching Sociology (ISSN 0092-055X) (J659) is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October on behalf of the American Sociological Association by SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320. Copyright ©2010 by American Sociological Association. All rights reserved. No portion of the contents may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher. Periodicals postage paid at Thousand Oaks, California, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Teaching Sociology, c/o SAGE Publications, Inc., 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320.

Non-Member Subscription Information: All non-member subscription inquiries, orders, back issues, claims, and renewals should be addressed to SAGE Publications, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320; telephone: (800) 818-SAGE (7243) and (805) 499-0721; fax: (805) 375-1700; e-mail: journals@sagepub.com; http://www.sagepublications.com. Subscription Price: Institutions: $236 (online/print), $212 (online only). Individual subscribers are required to hold ASA membership. For all customers outside the Americas, please visit http://www.sagepub.co.uk/customerCare.nav for information. Claims: Claims for undelivered copies must be made no later than six months following month of publication. The publisher will supply replacement issues when losses have been sustained in transit and when the reserve stock will permit.

Member Subscription Information: American Sociological Association member inquiries, change of address, back issues, claims, and membership renewal requests should be addressed to the Executive Office, American Sociological Association, 1430 K Street NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20005; Web site: http://www.asanet.org; e-mail: customer@asanet.org. Requests for replacement issues should be made within six months of the missing or damaged issue. Beyond six months and at the request of the American Sociological Association the publisher will supply replacement issues when losses have been sustained in transit and when the reserve stock permits.

Abstracting and Indexing: Please visit http://ts.sagepub.com and click on the Abstracting/Indexing link on the left-hand side to view a full list of databases in which this journal is indexed.

Copyright Permission: Permission requests to photocopy or otherwise reproduce material published in this journal should be submitted by accessing the article online on the journal’s Web site at http://ts.sagepub.com and selecting the “Request Permission” link. Permission may also be requested by contacting the Copyright Clearance Center via their Web site at http://www.copyright.com, or via e-mail at info@copyright.com.

Advertising and Reprints: Current advertising rates and specifications may be obtained by contacting the advertising coordinator in the Thousand Oaks office at (805) 410-7772 or by sending an e-mail to advertising@sagepub.com. To order reprints, please e-mail reprint@sagepub.com. Acceptance of advertising in this journal in no way implies endorsement of the advertised product or service by SAGE or the American Sociological Association. No endorsement is intended or implied. SAGE reserves the right to reject any advertising it deems as inappropriate for this journal.

Change of Address for Non-Members: Six weeks’ advance notice must be given when notifying of change of address. Please send the old address label along with the new address to the SAGE office address above to ensure proper identification. Please specify name of journal.

The American Sociological Association acknowledges, with appreciation, the facilities and assistance provided by Valdosta State University.
Guidelines for Papers Submitted to Teaching Sociology

*Teaching Sociology* publishes several types of papers. The basic distinction is between articles and notes. Generally, articles are longer than notes (about 25 pages long), more analytical, and 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 scholarship of teaching and learning in 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 scholarship of teaching and learning in 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 scholarship of teaching and learning in sociology?
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. Are 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 ongoing 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 ongoing 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.
One Starfish at a Time: Using Fundamentals in Sociology to Rethink Impressions about People Living with HIV/AIDS

Robin D. Moremen

Abstract
The purpose of this article is to document how a course in the fundamentals of sociology encouraged students to rethink negative impressions about people with AIDS. Multimethod, active learning processes were utilized to introduce the sociological imagination, critical thinking, and theory and methods in sociology. The intent was to apply basic sociological knowledge to a real-world issue, HIV/AIDS in a global perspective. In the process of developing basic skills in sociology, a consistent change was noted in students’ self-reported impressions about people with AIDS in each of four semesters (N = 160). Catastrophic contagion characterized their impressions at the beginning of the semester; humanizing attributes (encouragement and empowerment) replaced catastrophic contagion at the end of the semester. Implications of these findings for teaching and learning, and deconstructing HIV/AIDS stigma, are discussed.

Keywords
HIV/AIDS, stigma, impressions, sociological imagination, critical thinking

As a man walked along a beach one morning, he saw another figure in the distance. As he approached, he saw a child leaning down, picking something up, and throwing it out into the water. As the distance between them narrowed, the man could see that the child was picking up starfish that had washed up onto the beach and, one at a time, was throwing them back into the water. Puzzled, he asked the child what she was doing. “I’m throwing these starfish back into the ocean. You see, it’s low tide right now and all of these starfish have been washed up onto the shore. If I don’t throw them back into the sea, they’ll die up here.” “But there must be thousands of starfish on this beach,” the man replied. “You can’t possibly get all of them. There are just too many. Can’t you see that you can’t possibly make a difference?” The child smiled, bent down and picked up another starfish, and, as she threw it back into the sea, she replied, “It made a difference to that one!”

Adapted from Loren Eiseley (1978)

HIV/AIDS stigma remains a persistent problem in the twenty-first century (Buseh and Stevens 2006; Cao et al. 2006; Courtenay-Quirk et al. 2006; Parker and Aggleton 2003; Reidpath and Chan 2005; Simbayi et al. 2007; Varas-Diaz, Serrano-Garcia, and Toro-Alfonso 2005; Wolfe et al. 2006). Negative assumptions about people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) occur at both the individual and societal levels. Stigmatizing

Corresponding Author:
Robin D. Moremen, Department of Sociology, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115, USA
Email: rmoremen@niu.edu

1Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, USA
attitudes and behaviors are socially constructed by individuals; they grow out of negative impressions about people with AIDS that are internalized and accepted as true (Berger and Luckmann 1967). If not challenged, these views become embedded in the institutions of society where they affect access to power, privilege, and resources and may become exacerbated by other systems of inequality based on class, race, gender, and sexuality (Lee 1993; Parker and Aggleton 2003). Scholars agree that education is essential to deconstruct these negative messages (Lee 1993:30) and humanize people with AIDS (Herek, Widaman, and Capitanio 2005; Kanduza 2003). The sociology classroom provides one opportunity to examine and challenge these negative messages and potentially construct more positive images of PLWHA. And this is not limited to courses in medical sociology or the sociology of HIV/AIDS; core courses in sociology may serve this purpose as well.

Core courses in sociology provide the opportunity to introduce the sociological imagination—the link between individual experiences and social institutions (Mills 1959)—and to teach critical thinking skills to students who may rely upon personal experiences, observations, or reflections to explain their social worlds (Eckstein, Schoenike, and Delaney 1995; Lee 1993; Schwalbe 2005). Often, these forms of egocentric thinking (Paul and Elder 2006) are learned from people we love and trust (Cannon 1990). In all likelihood, negative impressions about PLWHA are learned in just such a manner. Where better to challenge these internalized assumptions than in a core course where the sociological imagination and critical thinking skills are used to introduce classical theories, methods, writing, and oral presentation skills in sociology? The author utilized a course in the foundations of sociology—one that follows the introductory experience but precedes upper-level courses in theory, methods, and sociological content—to address these issues.

The purpose of this article is to document how a course in the fundamentals of sociology encouraged students to rethink negative impressions about people with AIDS. Multimethod, active learning processes (Halnon 2001; Howard, Short, and Clark 1996; Lee 1993; Lewis 2004; Rodgers 2003) were utilized to introduce the sociological imagination (Eckstein et al. 1995; Mills 1959), critical thinking (Browne and Litwin 1987; Paul and Elder 2006; Ruane and Cerulo 2004), and theory and methods in sociology. The intent was to apply basic sociological knowledge to a real-world issue: HIV/AIDS in a global perspective. In the process of developing basic skills in sociology, a measurable change was noted in the students’ self-reported impressions about people with AIDS. This outcome evolved organically the first time the course was taught, but then was repeated the next three semesters with similar results. Changing their impressions was not a stated goal in the course, nor was the focus on HIV/AIDS made explicit prior to the first day of class. This was done to avoid self-selection into the course and to reduce the likelihood that they would report a change in impressions merely because they thought it was expected of them. As mentioned earlier, the intent was to apply the practice of sociology to a real-world issue, and no one was more surprised than I when the students reported a markedly more humane set of descriptors for a person with AIDS at the end of the semester than at the beginning. To rule out the possibility of a one-time chance finding, I repeated the content, methods, and before/after measurement of their impressions three more times, with virtually identical results. The content of the course and the results of the students’ self-reported impressions are reported and discussed here.

THE RELEVANCE OF HIV/AIDS TO SOCIOLOGY

While some may argue that HIV/AIDS is the particularistic concern of medical/health sociologists, this notion appears a bit myopic. HIV/AIDS is an issue that is central to discussions of deviance and social control, politics, culture, race, class, gender, sexuality, criminology, social policy, education, globalization . . . to name but a few of the subdisciplines within sociology to which it is related. HIV/AIDS necessitates impression management by individuals, but also lends itself to larger social structural perspectives, such as how nation states formulate AIDS policies. It is an issue that may directly impact our students through their own lived experiences, or through the lived experiences of family members, friends, and relatives. It is an issue affecting communities, most especially minority communities, women, and individuals who are gay or bisexual. Some may even believe that AIDS is a nonissue because of the armamentarium of drugs we have to treat the HIV virus;
however, unrelenting mutability renders this perspective naïve at best. It may be that students today have been exposed to AIDS activism that provides them with a more compassionate view of PLWHA, although the extant literature on HIV/AIDS-related stigma does not tend to support this position. By focusing on HIV/AIDS as a major social issue, students are simultaneously exposed to a variety of perspectives within sociology, as well as given the opportunity to see the connections between their personal experiences and the institutional structures that confer power, privilege, and resources in our society.

A foundations course in sociology that follows the basic introductory course but that precedes more advanced courses in theory, methods, and sociological content seems an ideal point in the curriculum to teach the fundamentals of sociology as well as to expect students to use those fundamentals to examine a meaningful social issue (Eckstein et al. 1995). Introductory courses tend to explore the pantheon of social institutions and social problems; a foundations course that develops the sociological imagination, critical thinking skills, scholarly writing techniques, and a basic understanding of theory and methods in sociology affords the opportunity to begin applying these tools to a particular social concern.

This article goes on to explore the problem of HIV/AIDS stigma, describe various active learning methods that were utilized in the foundations course, explain the structure of this particular course with its focus on HIV/AIDS, and share the findings from four semesters of repeated measures assessing before/after self-reported impressions of people with AIDS.

**HIV/AIDS STIGMA**

HIV/AIDS stigma is a global problem in the twenty-first century. Although not as prevalent as in the early years of the epidemic, PLWHA still experience a spoiled or discredited identity (Goffman 1963). PLWHA report feeling dirty, ashamed, and guilty (Simbayi et al. 2007), often internalizing their discredited identity as despair (Buseh and Stevens 2006), and perhaps with good reason. Many still experience loss of employment and living arrangements (Simbayi et al. 2007; Varas-Diaz et al. 2005; Wolfe et al. 2006), and have problems accessing health services (Varas-Diaz et al. 2005). Stigma results in delays in testing and seeking treatment (White and Carr 2005; Wolfe et al. 2006); medical profiling (Poindexter 2004); fear of disclosure to friends, family, sexual partners, and doctors—including admitting one’s status to oneself (Clark et al. 2003; Rao et al. 2006; Varas-Diaz et al. 2005; White and Carr 2005; Wolfe et al. 2006); decreased adherence to medication regimens (Rao et al. 2006); and decreased psychological functioning (Clark et al. 2003; Courtenay-Quirk et al. 2006; Murphy, Austin, and Greenwall 2006; Simbayi et al. 2007). Many PLWHA experience a layering of stigma that is intimately tied to institutionalized oppression in society (Parker and Aggleton 2003; Reidpath and Chan 2005). Ageism (for both elders, Emlet 2006, and youth, Rao et al. 2006), racism, sexism, classism (Buseh and Stevens 2006; Clark et al. 2003; Parker and Aggleton 2003; White and Carr 2005), and homophobia (Courtenay-Quirk et al. 2006; Herek et al. 2005; Norman, Carr, and Jimenez 2006; Parker and Aggleton 2003; Ramirez-Valles et al. 2005) both reproduce and confound HIV/AIDS stigma. HIV/AIDS may also result in secondary stigma for entire villages (Cao et al. 2006) and for uninfected children of women who are HIV-positive (Murphy et al. 2006).

Scholars agree that education to correct inaccurate beliefs and knowledge about HIV/AIDS is vital in reducing HIV/AIDS stigma (Herek et al. 2005; Kanduza 2003). The challenges of doing so in the sociology classroom have been addressed (Brabant 1991, 1994; Weitz 1989). For the most part, these efforts have focused on explicit teaching and learning about HIV/AIDS, as opposed to using the sociological perspective to examine human behavior around HIV/AIDS (Eckstein et al. 1995). What do we know about utilizing the sociology classroom to learn about stigma and change attitudes toward marginalized “others” more generally?

**LEARNING ABOUT STIGMA AND CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARD MARGINALIZED GROUPS**

Whether we term it *active learning* (Halnon 2001; Lewis 2004; Rodgers 2003), *active engagement* (Howard et al. 1996), or *active participation*
(Lee 1993), effective learning occurs when students are actively engaged, as opposed to passive recipients of perceived wisdom. Lee (1993:27) describes this process as one where “knowledge is relevant and useful, where classroom work is connected to the everyday experiences of students’ lives, and where students are engaged and moving the learning process forward.” She applies this to teaching gender politics in the classroom, but her methods are equally applicable to HIV/AIDS. She reminds us that issue politics concerns itself with seeing the ties between interpersonal interactions and the structures of power and privilege affecting people’s lives. Thus, individuals’ impressions about PLWHA affect their interpersonal relationships and forms of communication; these then become taken for granted in the larger culture and lead to discrimination in employment, housing, education, and health care. This connection is exactly what Mills (1959) envisioned when he linked personal troubles and public issues. If we are to break this cycle, then we must actively engage students to want to interact and communicate differently. Lee proposes in-class techniques (writing, small groups, role play, skits, etc.), course content, issues of power and authority in the classroom, and democratization as strategies for achieving awareness and change.

Halnon (2001) found that adopting a stigma in a public place was an effective way actively to experience what it feels like to be a marginalized “other.” What made her exercise so effective was its simplicity. She had her students stand perfectly still and “do nothing” in a public place and then ground their impressions in the sociological literature. Rodgers (2003) employed a different, but equally effective, technique by asking her students to create campaigns for, and countercampaigns against, a particular bodily stigma of their choosing. Both exercises were conducted in courses on the sociology of deviance. Lewis (2004) explored the stigma associated with mental illness by putting students in small groups where they discussed nontraditional narratives of mental illness in a “book club” format. He found that small groups facilitated a higher level of group intimacy and empowerment in their learning about the stigma of mental illness.

Observations, surveys, and interviews (Howard et al. 1996) are equally effective in building alliances with instructors and cohesion between classmates (Lee 1993; Malkin and Stake 2004) and social contact between students and members of marginalized groups (Sakalli and Ugurlu 2002). Conversely, varying the race/ethnicity of the instructor appears to have little effect (Williams et al. 1999), as do public proclamations of oppositional opinions (Bohm 1990). Multiple active learning methods were the basis for conceptualizing and delivering the course in the foundations of sociology. HIV/AIDS was the exemplar used throughout the course.

TEACHING FUNDAMENTALS AND APPLYING THEM TO HIV/AIDS

The goals of the foundations course were to develop the sociological imagination; develop critical thinking skills; better understand the role of theory and methods in critical thinking and the sociological imagination; apply the sociological imagination, critical thinking, and theory and methods to real-world issues; and develop scholarly writing techniques and oral presentation skills in the discipline of sociology. The real-world issue was HIV/AIDS in a global perspective. Enrollments were capped at 40 to 45 students in each of the four semesters that this course was taught.

Multiple learning objectives were developed for each goal. These were spelled out in the syllabus and on Blackboard (an online course management system available at our university) and were evaluated through their responses in large and small group discussions (I sat in on each group’s discussion), extensive written materials (they had weekly writing assignments that I used to assess whether or not the learning objectives were being achieved), 10 unannounced one-minute essays in class and online, self-evaluations, peer evaluations, and instructor evaluations of each step in the cumulative learning process, including their final poster presentations where they integrated their literature reviews, theory, methods, and results around HIV/AIDS–related stigma.

Kivisto introduces both classical and contemporary theory as it relates to industrial society, democracy, individualism, and modernity; Ruane and Cerulo debunk widely held conventional wisdoms through the application of empirical evidence in sociology (however, they do not address HIV/AIDS); and Wooten frames the story of Nkosi Johnson’s experience of HIV/AIDS within the social, historical, economic, political, and cultural milieu of South Africa.

The focus on HIV/AIDS was introduced the first day of class. Guided by an aging exercise where students are asked to write down the first three words that come to mind when they hear “an old person,” the students in the foundations class were asked to write down the first three words that came to mind when they heard a “person with AIDS.” These impressions provided the basis for an initial assessment of their ability to use the sociological imagination. They were aggregated into categories to maintain anonymity and to illustrate trends in their thinking. The aggregated data were posted on Blackboard and then were discussed the following class period. Because there were no differences across the four semesters, the data were merged for the purposes of this article and are the basis for Table 1.

As Table 1 indicates, their initial impressions were overwhelmingly negative, conforming to the worst stereotypes and caricatures of PLWHA. They converged around an assumption of catastrophic contagion (my term): Persons with AIDS were seriously ill, they were receiving a lot of treatment, and they were in the process of dying; their circumstances were tragic and sad; sexual activity was implicated in their diagnosis; HIV had affected their blood and immune system; they most likely lived in Africa, were poor, gay, and intravenous drug users.

![Table 1. Impressions of People with AIDS](image_url)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impression</th>
<th>Beginning of semester</th>
<th>End of semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sick/diseased</td>
<td>120 0.82***</td>
<td>27 0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death/dying</td>
<td>59 0.87***</td>
<td>9 0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex/sexually active</td>
<td>32 0.86***</td>
<td>5 0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness/sorrow</td>
<td>29 0.81***</td>
<td>7 0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggle/bad/tragic</td>
<td>28 0.58***</td>
<td>20 0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>23 0.68*</td>
<td>11 0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>23 0.79**</td>
<td>6 0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment/hospital/meds</td>
<td>23 0.55***</td>
<td>19 0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay/homosexual</td>
<td>16 0.94***</td>
<td>1 0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood</td>
<td>11 0.73***</td>
<td>4 0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magic Johnson</td>
<td>9 1.00**</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intravenous drug user</td>
<td>8 0.89*</td>
<td>1 0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>7 1.00**</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immune system</td>
<td>7 1.00**</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal/human being/equal</td>
<td>2 0.04****</td>
<td>51 0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stigma/discrimination</td>
<td>13 0.23****</td>
<td>43 0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong/strength</td>
<td>0 0.00****</td>
<td>38 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope/hopeful</td>
<td>5 0.14****</td>
<td>30 0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life/living</td>
<td>1 0.05****</td>
<td>20 0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee’s story</td>
<td>0 0.00***</td>
<td>15 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determined/encouraged</td>
<td>2 0.18*</td>
<td>9 0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice/friendly/loving</td>
<td>0 0.00**</td>
<td>8 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreams/goals</td>
<td>0 0.00**</td>
<td>7 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2 0.25**</td>
<td>6 0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>0 0.00*</td>
<td>5 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardworking</td>
<td>0 0.00*</td>
<td>5 1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. ****p < .0001 (two-tailed).
drug users; and, despite the fact that Magic Johnson has lived with AIDS for more than a decade, he was their poster child.

After discussing these findings in class, these data were used in their first written exercise on the sociological imagination. They were asked to compare their individual impressions with the aggregated impressions of the class and to analyze them sociologically by considering the following questions: Who invented these labels? How did you learn to value these beliefs or practices? Who benefits from these labels and who is hurt? How do the meanings of these labels affect people’s behavior? What relationships or privileges might be lost by giving up these beliefs or practices? Their written responses were evaluated by how well they were able to move beyond their individual impressions to see the relationships and privileges behind the labels. Eckstein et al. (1995) refer to this as finding the sociological voice; learning to think, speak, and write structurally, systematically, and critically. As Eckstein et al. warn, the students here struggled with the shift from learning about the sociological imagination and using it to examine their taken-for-granted assumptions about a PLWHA. The goal of finding a sociological voice was reinforced in the following two assignments.

Next, we watched the video Yesterday (Root 2006; the story of an HIV-positive woman living in rural South Africa) and began reading in Wooten (2005). After discussing the video and reading assignments in class, the students were asked to analyze the relationship between the characters’ experiences with HIV/AIDS and the historical, social, cultural, and economic conditions in South Africa portrayed in the two sources. They were asked to consider the patterns of life, or the routine ways of doing things, that they saw in the film (Yesterday) and read about in Wooten. How did they originate? What problems did this way of doing things solve? Who was advantaged and who was disadvantaged by this way of doing things? What other realities did these patterns of behavior suggest? What do they say about the nature of society in South Africa? The greatest difficulty they had was moving beyond the individual experiences of the main characters (Yesterday and Nkosi Johnson, respectively) to seeing the structure of South African society and its impact on the lives of all South Africans, including the characters in the video and book. By the third assignment, most students were able to use the sociological perspective to examine the behavior of the characters; most were able to see the association between structure and individual behavior.

The next three writing assignments asked them to apply eight critical thinking steps (purpose, questions, point of view, assumptions, information, theoretical concepts, conclusions, and implications) that were outlined by Paul and Elder (2006) to analyze one of the conventional wisdoms in Ruane and Cerulo (2004), the video Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible (Butler and Butler 2006), and a peer-reviewed article on HIV/AIDS-related stigma. They were evaluated on their ability to apply the concepts and tools laid out by Paul and Elder in The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools. These exercises proved easier to comprehend because Paul and Elder break down critical thinking into conceptually manageable components.

Scholarly writing was assessed by their ability to construct outlines and then flesh them out in fully developed literature reviews of at least five contemporary (past five years) peer-reviewed articles on HIV/AIDS-related stigma, including properly cited references (ASA format). They were required to identify two to three cross-cutting themes in their research articles and these were the focus of their literature reviews. Moving from individual summaries of articles to themes was a challenge for many students; however, these difficulties were mitigated by placing them in small groups where they worked collaboratively with instructor interaction with each group. These groups were kept constant throughout the semester.

Their ability to utilize sociological theory to critically analyze real-world issues was assessed by three measures. Marx, Weber, and Durkheim were introduced in class as well as in Kivisto (2004). First, they were given the option to use any of the three theories to analyze the video Tsotsi (Hood 2005; the coming-of-age of an AIDS orphan in the townships of South Africa). They had to explain, in their own words, the theory they chose; describe a segment of the video they wished to analyze; and then apply the theory to examine that part of the video. They were evaluated on their understanding of the theory and their ability to appropriately apply the theory to the video. Then, they had to choose a second theory to analyze a chapter in Wooten (2005), and the
remaining theory was used to analyze a conventional wisdom in Ruane and Cerulo (2004). They were allowed to choose which theory to apply when, but in each case, the application had to be appropriate. Weber proved the most difficult to apply; they had more success with Marx and Durkheim. Two of the three applications had HIV/AIDS as their theme.

Our discussion of research methods addressed both qualitative and quantitative methods. Assessment included constructing, implementing, and analyzing the results of a class interview of a woman with AIDS and constructing, implementing, and analyzing the results of a class-initiated survey of HIV/AIDS stigma. At my university, data collection intended only for classroom use and not dissemination via scholarly outlets is not required to go through the human participants approval process.

The students constructed interview guides in their small groups. These were evaluated on the quality, clarity, and sequencing of their questions; whether or not they were open-ended; and the quality of their probes. There were eight small groups; each group revised their interview guides based on instructor feedback. The interview participant gave an opening statement during which she introduced herself and provided basic information about her background and HIV status. The instructor drew group numbers from a hat until all groups had asked their first question, including probes and follow-ups. When all eight groups had exhausted their first question, we began the random draw again and repeated the process until the 75-minute class period ended. All group members were required to take notes during the interview. They were allowed to decide the order in which their questions were asked. Considering that another group might ask “their” question, they had to think ahead at least two or three questions. Surprisingly, there were few lags in the questioning. We had discussed issues of anonymity and confidentiality before the interview, and we gave the participant the opportunity to create her own pseudonym; she chose “Annika.”

Annika did not fit the profile typified by their initial impressions and thus she challenged their assumptions about what it means to be a person living with AIDS. Annika is a former student who is committed to educating others about HIV/AIDS. I felt it was important for them to meet someone who was living with, and not immediately dying of, AIDS. Annika has had periods of compromised immunity and increased viral load, but as long as she takes her medications and pursues healthy behaviors, she remains generally healthy. She is a white, middle-class, scholar/athlete who became HIV-positive following a sexual assault by someone she knew. She has experienced profound stigmatizing attitudes from her family, friends, teammates, associates, and her insuror. She was available and willing to participate in the interview on each of the four occasions this class was taught. She did not vary her introductory statement across the four semesters, although some of the questions the students asked did vary from semester to semester. After the interview, the students met in their small groups and discussed their findings. Collectively, they combined their interview notes into one “complete” set of notes that were submitted for evaluation, together with two to three themes with supporting statements. For the most part, their themes grew out of the data and were adequately grounded in the statements made by Annika in the interview.

When we moved on to quantitative methods, each small group created a one-page survey that included seven randomly ordered positive and negative statements about a PLWHA, plus demographic variables (the students chose to include sex, race/ethnicity, age, and education most often). The statements were measured using five bipolar response categories. I evaluated the quality, clarity, and originality of each group’s statements; the clarity and appropriateness of their demographic variables; the clarity and appropriateness of their response categories; proper use of grammar and sentence structure; and the overall appeal of the instrument. Next, each group contributed their “best” positive and negative statement to a class survey that we finalized through an open, democratic discussion until everyone was satisfied with the final product. I reproduced five copies of the final survey for each student. They administered the survey to five friends and family members, and then we coded the variables, entered the data in SPSS, and analyzed the results, utilizing descriptive statistics and chi-square analyses of significance. I evaluated the accuracy of their coding and data entry and the appropriateness and accuracy of their data analysis. Each small group coded and entered their own data, and then I combined the eight data sets into one large data set that everyone used for the statistical analyses. Only half of the students had taken
statistics prior to enrolling in this course, so I had to walk some of them through the basics of descriptive statistics and chi-square analyses of significance; in addition, those who had statistical expertise assisted those who did not. No one had experience with SPSS, but after a short tutorial, they caught on quickly. I attribute this to their comfort level with computer software in general. Most groups were able to discuss the descriptive results accurately and to find and discuss significant differences in the HIV-related statements by the demographic variables.

Finally, I had each small group synthesize the literature, theory, methods, and results into a poster presentation that focused on a theme related to HIV/AIDS stigma. They shared the final product with their classmates in an oral presentation that was evaluated both by me and by them. To mitigate the problem of free-riding in the small groups, they evaluated themselves and one another. In addition, I spent considerable time with each small group throughout the semester and was able to identify and mitigate inclinations to free-ride among group members.

At the end of the first semester that I taught this course, I decided that it would be interesting to see if their impressions about a person with AIDS had changed over the 16 weeks. Their final one-minute essay was to again write down the first three words that came to mind when they heard a “person with AIDS.” To my surprise, their impressions were markedly more positive than those we had analyzed at the beginning of the semester. To rule out the possibility of a one-time chance finding, I repeated the content, methods, and before/after measurement of their impressions the next three semesters, with virtually identical results. The data in Table 1 are aggregated across all four semesters, with enrollments as follows: 34 (Fall 2006), 40 (Spring 2007), 42 (Fall 2007), and 44 (Spring 2008) students (N = 160). There were significantly more positive impressions at the end of each semester than at the beginning of the semester. At the end of the semester, their impressions converged around humanizing attributes of encouragement and empowerment (my terms). Stigma and discrimination played a large role in their impressions, but this reflected the reactions of others, not themselves. In the face of social stigma and discrimination, a person with AIDS still had hopes and dreams and fought for normality with strength and determination. This person was living and loving, not dying, and was friendly, happy, and hardworking. The interview participant was now their archetype of a PLWHA.

**CHANGING IMPRESSIONS IN THE SOCIOLOGY CLASSROOM**

While it would be useful to know which aspects of the course most contributed to the change in their impressions, those data were not collected. In all likelihood it was the cumulative experience of learning to think sociologically and critically about an important social issue; it remains for others to figure out the corresponding contributions of each component. This course was an intensive, active learning experience for both instructor and student. While the amount of work should not be underestimated, the result was well worth the effort. As others have found, an active learning environment that engages and challenges students to view stigmatized “others” with greater tolerance and understanding has proven successful (Halnon 2001; Howard et al. 1996; Lee 1993; Lewis 2004; Malkin and Stake 2004; Rodgers 2003; Sakalli and Ugurlu 2002).

Active learning was pursued in multiple ways in this course.

First, the students spent considerable time in student-centered small groups and had weekly writing assignments that asked them to use the sociological perspective and critical thinking to better understand the experiences of PLWHA. They discussed the readings, videos, their literature reviews, the interviews, surveys, and poster presentations in their small groups, and they wrote both individually and collectively about what they read, saw, and heard. Lee (1993) uses small groups to help students better understand how interpersonal relationships are tied to gender-based institutional sources of power and privilege. She stresses that active learning, where students are “engaged and moving the learning process forward,” helps students to become more aware of gender politics (i.e., the relationship between institutional arrangements based on gender and the personal experiences of individual women; Lee 1993:27). Lewis (2004) uses small groups to create a higher level of intimacy and empowerment in students’ learning about the stigma of mental illness. A similar small-group strategy was used here to see the relationship between institutional structures and individual experiences of HIV/AIDS-related stigma.
Second, teaching the sociological imagination and critical thinking requires uncovering and questioning taken-for-granted assumptions and learning to see that thoughts and actions are shaped by forces outside the individual (i.e., learning to “see” structure; Eckstein et al. 1995). Eckstein et al. (1995) argue that learning about the sociological perspective is different from using it to examine human behavior. This was a specific goal in this course. All of the materials were selected because they challenged negative assumptions about conventional wisdom in general and people with AIDS in particular. The relationship between personal prejudice and institutional structures for PLWHA was continually stressed. This was poignantly witnessed in the two videos (Yesterday, Root 2006, and Tsotsi, Hood 2005), in the story of Nkosi Johnson (We Are All the Same, Wooten 2005), in their literature reviews, in the interview with the woman with AIDS, and in their surveys. When institutional structures reflected stigmatized impressions, there were very real consequences for PLWHA: the main characters Yesterday and Tsotsi were denied access to adequate housing, education, jobs, and health care; Nkosi Johnson was nearly denied access to public education and did not survive to adolescence; interpersonal and institutional discrimination were consistent themes in the literature reviews; and the interview participant was rejected by family, friends, teammates, and insurers. Lee (1993) employed a similar strategy in her choice of topics that addressed gender stratification. Her goal was to “empower students to understand, question, and change their own lives” in order to “unlearn” prejudice and deconstruct and destabilize taken-for-granted, accepted “truths” (Lee 1994:29).

Third, the students were allowed to determine democratically the length of their writing assignments, choose which theories to apply when, compose their own interview questions and survey items, and evaluate one another’s poster presentations. Howard et al. (1996) employed democratic methods to encourage verbal participation in a mixed-age classroom. Lee (1993) posits that democratic classroom structures that encourage negotiation and collaboration help to facilitate understanding of gender politics. Democratic methods also served to build an alliance between instructor and student and build cohesion between the students themselves. Malkin and Stake (2004) and Lee (1993) found that alliance, cohesion, and bonding led to more egalitarian attitudes in the classroom. Lewis (2004:397) found that democratically structured small groups led to increased participation, intimacy, and empowerment in their own learning.

Fourth, the interview participant fostered a high degree of social contact between the students and a person with AIDS. The students reported anecdotally that the interview participant had a profound impact on their understanding of what it means to live with AIDS and not have to face the constant prospect of sickness and death. Sakalli and Ugurlu (2002) found that introducing a lesbian in the classroom resulted in significant improvement in pretest/posttest attitudes toward homosexuals. In addition, the surveys (Howard et al. 1996) afforded students the opportunity to discuss the topic of HIV/AIDS with the significant people in their lives, and the videos and reading materials helped to contextualize HIV/AIDS, as well as to expand their understanding to include a global perspective. While students were reminded that PLWHA may experience episodes of sickness and stigma, the social distance between themselves and a person with AIDS narrowed significantly, as evidenced by their impressions at the end of the semester when compared with those at the beginning of the semester; there was a much greater emphasis on humanizing attributes than on catastrophic contagion.

ADDRESSING HIV/AIDS STIGMA IN THE SOCIOLOGY CLASSROOM

The efforts discussed here are consistent with other interpersonal efforts to change attitudes (Kanduza 2003), correct inaccurate beliefs and knowledge (Herek et al. 2005), promote tolerance and understanding (MacIntosh 2007), and reduce fear, particularly of casual transmission, toward PLWHA (Cao et al. 2006). While the links between private troubles and public issues were constantly stressed, the classroom strategies addressed here fell short of programmatic or institutionalized efforts to bring about change in HIV/AIDS stigma. Community involvement has been found to buffer the effects of stigma on psychological well-being (Ramirez-Valles et al. 2005), as has resistance that challenges and opposes the shame and discrediting attitudes associated with HIV/AIDS (Buseh and Stevens 2006; Parker and Aggleton 2003). The classroom experiences described here do not live up to these aims;
instead, they capture in-camera changes in self-reported impressions. Nevertheless, interpersonal efforts that challenge negative impressions of PLWHA are a first step toward resistance and change at the institutional level. To the extent that self-reported responses are indicative of individual resistance, they may represent tentative first steps toward greater social justice for PLWHA. Widespread, meaningful change only occurs when a significant number of people demand it. The students in these four classes are a starting point. But will the differences in their before/after impressions extend to allied or activist efforts outside the classroom and/or will they persist over time?

Although statistically significant, the differences in the impressions between the beginning and the end of the semester should not be overstated. It is important to acknowledge that their initial impressions likely were hardened over 20 years of socialization and internalization (Berger and Luckmann 1967); it is unreasonable to assume that a 16-week course would undo them completely. Enduring change will most likely depend upon what they do with this knowledge once they leave the insular environment of the classroom. Will they take the next step and educate others, become allies, and/or initiate efforts to bring about change in institutional actions and policies (Griffin and Harro cited in Adams, Bell, and Griffin 1997:109)? Answering these questions would require a longitudinal design that is beyond the scope of the present study, but one that is certainly worth investigating in the future.

GENERALIZED APPLICABILITY OF THESE METHODS

The classroom approaches described here focused on using the sociological perspective, critical thinking, and theory and methods to examine assumptions about PLWHA. While this is most directly relevant to medical/health sociologists, sociologists in other subdisciplines may still benefit from the previously described curricular design and evaluative process. The methods described here might be equally effective when addressing antiracist or anti-ageist work, gender equity, economic parity, environmental justice, and/or sexual equality. For example, one might ask students at the beginning and end of the semester to note their impressions when they hear “a person who is old” or a “person who is LGBT” or a “person who is poor.” Then, through a variety of active learning methods that introduce the sociological imagination and critical thinking, they might explore more open, tolerant, and progressive ways of viewing stigmatized “others.” Small group discussions, videos, frequent writing assignments, interviews, and surveys that challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and spell out the relationship between personal prejudice and institutional structures may be applied in a diverse range of sociology courses. Efforts at democratic decision making may foster alliances between instructors and students, and between students themselves, facilitating the opportunity to learn through these other-identified connections. Fostering contact between students and positive role models that present new or diverse images of the elderly, people who are LGBT, people from different racial and ethnic groups, people who celebrate different religions, or people from different socioeconomic backgrounds may serve to humanize those whom students may have previously viewed as “others.” The strength of sociology lies in its view that equality is desirable and that positive social change is not only possible, but valuable. This article illustrates one such example in this tradition.

NOTES

An earlier version of this article was accepted for presentation at the 104th meeting of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, CA, August 11, 2009.

Reviewers for this manuscript were, in alphabetical order, Kevin Delaney, Diane Rodgers, and Gregory Weiss.

REFERENCES


Emlet, Charles A. 2006. “‘You’re Awfully Old to Have This Disease’: Experiences of Stigma and Ageism in Adults 50 Years and Older Living with HIV/AIDS.” *The Gerontologist* 46(6):781-90.


Malkin, Craig and Jayne E. Stake. 2004. “Changes in Attitudes and Self-Confidence in the Women’s and Gender Studies Classroom: The Role of Teacher Alliance and Student Cohesion.” *Sex Roles* 50(7-8):455-68.


Rodgers, Diane M. 2003. “‘The Stigmatizers and the Stigmatized’: Enacting the Social Construction of
Wooten, Jim. 2005. We Are All the Same. New York: Penguin Press.

Bio

Robin D. Moremen, PhD, P.T. is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology at Northern Illinois University. Her research interests include health, aging, HIV/AIDS, gender, long-term care, and multicultural education. She teaches courses in Health and Aging, Death and Dying, Medical Sociology, Women’s Health Issues, Health Organizations, and Fundamentals of Sociology.