

GETTING MORE OUT OF LESS: THE BENEFITS OF SHORT-TERM EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN UNDERGRADUATE SOCIOLOGY COURSES*

Experiential learning is a flexible instructional tool, adaptable to suit most courses. However, only a minority of instructors use these types of assignments in their courses. I examine whether short-term experiential learning reduces the drawbacks that may prevent instructors from using this instructional technique. I explore instructor and student perspectives on three types of short-term exercises: observations, participant-observations, and field trips. I find that short-term experiential assignments reduce the logistical concerns involved in experiential exercises and increase the opportunities for analytical reflection, especially for instructors of smaller courses and for non-field trip activities. In large introductory lecture courses, additional steps to structure the reflection process can successfully alleviate many of the problems dealing with lack of analysis. Proper selection of exercises included and careful choices about their use in courses or units with sensitive subject matter will help increase the chance of positive learning outcomes.

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AT MOST COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, only a minority of professors adopt experiential learning techniques in their classrooms (Gore and Nelson 1984; Parilla and Hesser 1998). What keeps instructors from incorporating experiential learning into their classrooms? Are there ways of structuring experiential learning that will facilitate its implementation? Are some types of experiential learning techniques better suited to particular instructional contexts, such as large lecture classes or small courses, than others? I examine the benefits and drawbacks to experiential learning, and explore whether short-term experiential assignments can improve upon an experiential learning exercise of longer duration.

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Jeffrey Cantor (1997:1) defines experiential education in his report on its value: "Experiential education refers to learning activities that engage the learner directly in the phenomena being studied." Most often this involves linking out-of-classroom experiences with in-class learning. Cooperative education, exchange programs, field trips, active in-class project learning and service learning are all examples of experiential learning. I focus on a small subset of experiential education methods, referred to as short-term experiential exercises, that take students out of the classroom and into the field. I subsequently examine how sociologists and students evaluate the technique in their courses.

"Short-term experiential learning," a term coined by sociologist Rik Scarce (1997), refers to assignments that ask students to integrate course material with a brief excursion to observe or participate in a related social phenomenon. This contrasts with experiential learning methods such as cooperative and service learning, that often involve semester to year-long commitments from both student and instructor. Short-term experiential learning can be incorporated into

a course for a brief period of time, often lasting less than a day. Although there has been some scholarship on the hazards and pitfalls of experiential teaching techniques (Grauerholz and Copenhaver 1994; Scarce 1997), little has been written on how to reduce these drawbacks.

Based on interviews with sociology instructors and feedback from students, I find that short-term experiential learning assignments do reduce some of the possible drawbacks of longer-term experiential exercises, while retaining many of the method's substantive, methodological, pedagogical and transitional benefits. As a result, short-term experiential assignments are especially beneficial for the instructor who is using experiential learning for the first time.

BENEFITS OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Amidst calls for "inquiry-based learning" (Boyer Commission 1998), increased student-faculty contact, and active learning (Chickering and Gamson 1987) by educational policymakers, research on experiential learning is especially relevant to improvements in undergraduate education. Benefits of experiential learning can be grouped into four categories: substantive, methodological, pedagogical, and transitional.

Experiential learning is frequently mentioned as an effective tool for helping students make connections to the subject matter, at a depth that cannot be gained through books and lectures alone. Many argue that the method is especially useful for sociology, as it facilitates the comprehension of a central concept of introductory sociology courses, the "sociological imagination" (Mills 1959). For example, Grauerholz and Copenhaver (1994:320) write that developing a sociological imagination, or an understanding of connections between history and biography "is virtually impossible to achieve through more conventional teaching methods," but is viable through experiential techniques. Grant et al. (1981) describe a field

trip to Detroit neighborhoods for a mass introduction to sociology course, and find that the excursion made abstract social processes, such as insurance "redlining," visible to students.

In addition to making sociological concepts clearer, experiential assignments can have a positive effect on students' methodological skills. Scarce (1997) organized several trips for his environmental sociology and social movements courses, and found that field trips allow students to engage actively in testing and generating theories. Similarly, Ostrower (1998) and Keen (1996), who teach research methods courses, note that observational assignments establish a research orientation among students. Grauerholz and Copenhaver (1994) argue that experiential assignments are also effective for teaching non-traditional research techniques, because they rely upon and validate the use of personal experience that is central to many conceptions of feminist methodology (Collins 1994; Maher and Tetreault 1992; Smith 1987) and grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Third, experiential learning's advocates in sociology note that it benefits student learning processes and the classroom climate. Many find experiential learning useful in addressing a multiplicity of student learning styles, as it combines abstract, concrete, reflective and active learning (Anderson and Adams 1992; Cantor 1997; Coleman 1976; DeMartini 1983; Duley and Permaul 1984; Kolb 1984). Grant et al. (1981), who found that their Detroit field trip encouraged students to become more active in their own and others' learning, is an illustration of Cantor's (1997:1) claim that experiential learning "facilitates active multisensory involvement of one's students in some aspect of the course content." Scarce (1997) also adds that faculty participation in these trips can help instructors and students develop closer working relationships.

Finally, many argue that experiential learning can help facilitate the transition between undergraduate education and the workforce, subsequent courses in the disci-

pline, and postbaccalaureate schooling. Sobal et al. (1981) measured students' enrollment in subsequent sociology courses for a year following their introductory sociology course. They found that students in the experiential sections demonstrated more commitment to the discipline than did students in the control sections. Some hypothesize that experiential learning facilitates the transition to the workplace by exposing undergraduates to employment possibilities (Chickering 1977; Rippetoe 1977) and by teaching workplace social skills (Cantor 1997). In a study of students who did and did not have a fieldwork component to their courses, Gore and Nelson (1984) found that students who completed fieldwork demonstrated more clearly defined professional goals. Finally, experiential learning may help those students who choose to attend graduate school; according to Cantor (1997), both O'Neill (1992) and Gregory (1990) established that students who have participated in experiential learning go on to graduate school at a much higher rate.

DRAWBACKS OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

In spite of the numerous benefits of experiential learning listed in both the sociological and general pedagogical literature, many note that if not planned or administered properly, the technique can have numerous drawbacks. By analyzing these drawbacks, it is possible to identify many of the reasons that instructors are unwilling or hesitant to use experiential techniques. The primary drawbacks lie in the areas of logistical concerns and the outcomes of experiential techniques.

Reflections on the implementation of experiential learning in sociology courses often note the extensive amount of planning and thought needed for a successful exercise. Scarce (1997) documents numerous administrative considerations that an instructor must make before planning an excursion: among them student schedules, transportation, insurance, Institutional Review Board ap-

proval (if appropriate), and arrangements with the site. Legal issues vary from campus to campus, but may require consultations with a risk management or university counsel's office, and signed waivers from students.¹ Increasing the educational usefulness of experiential education involves establishing clear expectations from the outset for an assignment (Scarce 1997), teaching needed observational and interviewing skills (Ostrower 1998), choosing readings that encourage reflection and theoretical connections (Grant et al. 1981), and revising the exercise based on student evaluations (Scarce 1997). These steps take time.

Common experiential learning techniques such as cooperative and service learning often engage the student in a semester to year-long commitment. This arrangement may seem like a logistical impossibility to an instructor deciding to experiment with the technique. In contrast, a short-term assignment, while still requiring significant planning, makes experiential learning more feasible.

Outcomes are also critical to an evaluation of experiential learning. John Dewey (1938:13) notes that "the belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative." Grant et al. (1981:23) liken bad experiential learning to a "zoo phenomenon," with students peering out passively at a site and reinforcing their stereotypes. Similarly, Scarce (1997) compares unproductive experiential exercises to a childhood classroom trip to the planetarium, where little reflection or theorizing occurs about the stars "out there." Experiential learning does not have guaranteed results. Sobal et al. (1981) find no difference in student evaluations or objectively-measured mastery of material between experiential learning sections in introductory sociology that used many in-class active learning exercises, and those sections that utilized a traditional lecture and

¹See Schultz (1992) for a useful discussion of liability issues that accompany internships.

discussion format. Lessons can be found in the authors' conclusion that experiential exercises can be overdone and that instructors should intensively use one to two exercises rather than many types in one class (Sobal et al. 1981).

In long-term experiential learning arrangements, the extensive amount of time spent in the external learning environment may preclude the time available to reflect on that experience. Dewey (1938:31) considers time for student reflection, arguing that experience is a "moving force" that must be judged and directed. Since student preparation and reflection are requisite components of a successful experiential learning assignment, short-term experiential learning may help novice users attain better results.

A third consideration, more troubling than a finding that experiential education demonstrates only a negligible improvement over traditional pedagogical techniques, is that it may have a detrimental effect on students. In regards to very personal and traumatic subject matter, such as sexual violence, Grauerholz and Copenhaver (1994:321) note that "the fact is that if we encourage students to think about the connections between their personal lives and the world around them—a major goal of sociological research—we are putting some students at risk." An experienced instructor who has discussed options with his or her class and has developed a climate of trust in the classroom may encounter much success with the method; however, the possible drawbacks may outweigh the benefits for a novice instructor who is dealing with sensitive course material.

In sum, the inclusion of an experiential assignment in an undergraduate course requires much thought. Being selective about which experiential exercises to include in a course, choosing short-term experiential assignments to decrease planning time and increase reflection, and avoiding its use in courses or units with sensitive subject matter may help facilitate the transition to experiential learning for faculty, and increase the chance of positive outcomes.

INSTRUCTORS' REFLECTIONS

I examined instructors' involvement with short-term experiential learning in the areas of a group field trip, an individual observation assignment, and an individual participant-observation project. I selected these instructors by analyzing the past 10 years of course syllabi on file in the Department of Sociology at a major research university in the Midwest, and chose those courses that included a short-term experiential assignment in their syllabi. In addition, I solicited, by e-mail, graduate student instructors (GSI's) who had worked with such an assignment. Out of this process, I found four courses on the following topics: introductory sociology, the organization of health care, childhood and adolescence, and medical sociology. Within these courses, I interviewed three instructors and three GSI's about the nature of the exercise, the advantages and disadvantages it afforded, and whether they thought that the short-term exercise approximated the results of a long-term experience for students. (See Appendix for questions asked of instructors.)

Analysis of these data developed from an inductive research framework, based on Glaser and Strauss's (1967) conception of grounded theory, wherein data collection and analysis proceed concurrently. As Charmaz (1983:110) emphasizes, "the grounded theory method stresses discovery and theory development rather than logical deductive reasoning which relies on prior theoretical frameworks." I developed an initial schedule of questions for instructors, but conducted the interviews in a semi-structured, open-ended format. Since there were only six instructors, I coded using a very broad, conceptual lens (Corbin and Strauss 1990; Glaser 1987) to preserve nearly all of their comments in my analysis.

Three types of short-term experiential learning assignments were used: unobtrusive observations, field trips, and participant observations. Unobtrusive observation assignments ask students to witness, describe and interpret social processes, but do not ask

them to get involved with the subject. Because they do not require interaction with a subject, observation exercises may be preferable for instructors concerned about the potential dangers of sending students out into the field. Field trip-based experiential assignments require students, as a group, to observe or interact with a subject or phenomenon. Because an instructor often accompanies the group, this strategy may be useful for those instructors who want students to gain an in-depth understanding of subject matter through participation, but who also wish to have some control and supervision over the enterprise. Finally, participant-observation assignments that ask students to observe and interact with a subject or phenomenon allow students to gain in-depth information, but afford instructors the least control over this process.

Unobtrusive Observations

Instructor A's observation assignment asked students: "How are children socialized in preschools?" After reading about gender socialization processes in childhood for a course on the sociology of childhood and adolescence, students observed preschool children's play for 30 minutes. For the first 25 minutes, undergraduates took field notes about the children's actions and interactions with teachers. For the remainder of the time, students counted how many times boys and girls touched, both inter- and intra-gender physical contacts. For each of these data sources, students wrote an analysis using course material, noting how sociologists would explain the observations, any visible processes of socialization, and what the children had not yet been socialized to do.

Both Instructor A and GSI A noted that the exercise was useful in getting students more in touch with the subject matter; after all, it had been years since undergraduates had lived in world of preschoolers. GSI B, who also assisted, noted that the exercise got students excited about the material because prior to the exercise, they had been reading a lot of tough sociological theory. All of the

instructors found that the exercise demonstrated to students that academic research is a process, not just an invention of people. Additionally, Instructor A found that the interaction with children helped students move from a framework that sees gender as biologically-derived, to one that sees it as socially constructed, an important concept in sociology courses on gender.

When asked about the most significant drawback about this exercise, the instructor and GSIs had different answers. Curiously, each did not feel that the other's concern was problematic for them. These differing views are probably an outgrowth of the division of labor for the exercise. Instructor A took care of the logistical arrangements, while GSIs graded student work. Because the class totaled just over 100 students, Instructor A found that setting up the exercise was a "logistical nightmare." However, both GSIs commented that the arrangements made by the instructor went very smoothly. The GSIs found a major problem with evaluating the exercise was that students took it less seriously than they might a library-based research paper. The instructor and GSIs mentioned that if they used the technique again in their own teaching, they would be explicit about how to treat the exercise, because introductory level students have little exposure to experiential learning.

Both Instructor A and the two GSIs mentioned that extending the observation period could be advantageous. Instructor A wanted students to collect a larger aggregation of data to gain a better sense of the meaning of children's physical contacts. GSI A wanted a longer period at the center to allow students to capture better the nuances in children's play, and to obtain more data that might contradict their assumptions. GSI B mentioned that students felt hurried, and felt more time at the center would alleviate the problem. However, they did not point to the short time frame as a negative feature of the observation. In short, more time would be useful, but it was not necessary.

Overall, the instructors found that this observation assignment offered substantive,

methodological and pedagogical benefits. Neither the instructor nor the GSIs mentioned transitional benefits. This could be explained by the less participative role played by students, and therefore the lower levels of engagement, or by the lack of information about students' paths after the course ended. With regard to drawbacks, instructors were most concerned about time constraints and the seriousness of the students. Because this was a large course, more arrangements needed to be made despite the short-term nature of the assignment. Additionally, instructors felt that students at an introductory level needed clear guidance about the pedagogical goals and overall importance of an experiential learning assignment.

Field Trips

Although often associated with grade school education, field trips can be useful for undergraduates as well. Scarce (1997:219) notes that "field trips offer the sort of enriching experiences that Dewey recognized as so central to successful educational endeavors because they are *experiences*, lived social events that become ways of knowing."

Instructor B's experiences with short-term experiential learning span 20 years. The instructor first developed a field trip to a large, urban city for a 500-person introduction to sociology course in the early 1980s, and more recently organized trips to the city for a smaller course on the organization of health care. Instructor B originally decided to incorporate an experiential component in the introductory course after taking a 10-year hiatus from teaching it. Returning to the course, Instructor B found that students were less connected to questions of structural inequality, and often faced a "blank gaze" when talking about such issues. When discussing the disconnection with GSIs, Instructor B asked: "Can we create some experiences which will make these issues real and live?" Their product was a field trip to a large, urban city that explored issues such as institutional segregation and urban

disintegration.

The field trip took a great deal of work to arrange and primarily was facilitated by a GSI who had been a journalist in the city. Instructor B found the trip "extremely effective," noting that "the value of experiential learning is that the subject is real and comes alive." However, Instructor B also found that in early student attempts at analysis, many wrote descriptive—"my summer at camp"—or non-analytical "politically correct" answers. Instructor B stressed the need to direct conversation while on the trip, to prepare students intellectually through readings and lectures, and to develop focused questions for student reflection. After taking these steps, Instructor B saw improvement in students' work.

In the past year, for a course on health care, Instructor B has continued to offer a short-term experiential learning component. After reading about community development strategies, the class travels to the same city to meet with church leaders, block organizers, junior high school nurses, community leaders and the homeless to learn about issues of health care provision in the community. Students then compare the qualitative observations they have made with statistical data on the effects of discrimination and stress on the health of African Americans. Instructor B provided very clear guidelines so that students could make connections between their experiences and the statistical data.

When asked about the trip's effects, Instructor B commented that students came back excited about the material, and that many of their stereotypes had been "blown away." GSI C, who assisted with this course, noted that many of the students had little knowledge of the city, having visited only the airport, and needed a direct view of the neighborhoods discussed by the class. Several students used connections made on the trip to develop a final project. One group completed a nutrition survey of food available in the area's stores, and yet another planned a bagel franchise to funnel money to the community.

The benefits for field trips, as identified by Instructor B and GSI C, cover all four of the categories mentioned in the literature. Students understood abstract concepts better (substantive), instructors became more enthusiastic about the course (pedagogical), students used their experiences for future research (transitional), and the students were able to test theories and compare different sources of data (methodological). Instructor B mentioned that establishing an experiential learning component was a lot of work for a large class, but did not mention this as a drawback for the smaller course. Another initial drawback was lack of intense student reflection, but Instructor B felt that explicit guidelines resolved this problem. Finally, like the instructors for introduction to sociology through childhood and adolescence, Instructor B felt that more time at site would be desirable but that it was not essential.

Participant-Observation

Participant-observation assignments are perhaps the most risky form of experiential education for an instructor to assign. While they allow students to immerse themselves in the cultures of groups or events, participant-observation assignments also pose the most risk for students. Both in terms of finding a subject, and maintaining safety in dealing with that subject, participant-observation assignments need to be negotiated carefully.

One way to do this is by offering students extensive guidance and choice. Instructor C's course in Medical Sociology examines different cultural perspectives on health and healing, including biomedical models and non-Western holistic approaches. After reading scholarship on, and viewing films about, these models, students complete a final paper that relies upon their field research of an alternative health resource. Students are not required to undergo any alternative health treatment, and are explicitly instructed to leave if they feel uncomfortable in any way. In order to address the issues of personal discomfort raised by Grauerholz and Copenhaver (1994), at their

discretion, students could substitute a paper based on library research. Over the years, student projects have included research about natural food and healing stores, reflexology, massage therapy, chiropractic medicine and self-help groups.

Instructor C noted that in many cases this exercise was very successful. Students chose topics that excited them, and the research made theoretical presentations of non-Western medicine more visible. Throughout the course, Instructor C encouraged students to rely upon their own experiences with the health care system, and found that the participation-observation paper reinforced this methodological approach. Many students enjoyed the option to test the ideas they learned about in class. However, she noted that a problem with the exercise was that many students had difficulties choosing a resource, and Instructor C had to offer a lot of guidance about how to do so.

Instructor C's reflection on the advantages of participant-observation assignments included substantive, methodological and pedagogical benefits. Like the instructors for the observational assignment, Instructor C did not mention transitional benefits, but this might be explained by the fact that the course was last offered only a year prior to the interview. While instructors for the observation and field trip assignments had the most difficulty with how to best encourage reflection, Instructor C named procedural issues as the biggest problem. This is not surprising, considering the less structured nature of individual participant-observation assignments. Finally, the nature of Instructor C's assignment was personal and potentially risky, yet there were no negative consequences. This illustrates how choice, instructor support, and guidance do alleviate some of the issues of trauma and sensitivity mentioned by Grauerholz and Copenhaver (1994).

STUDENTS' VIEWS

What do students value about short-term experiential assignments? The courses I examined were not taught recently (the time

elapsed ranges from 1 to 20 years), so it would have been difficult to contact students directly. As a result, I relied upon anonymous student evaluations of my own participant-observation assignments, for criminology (N=7) and social deviance (N=10), and of two field trips I helped to design in courses on science, technology and work (N=5), and scientific change (N=17). The last two courses were not offered through the sociology department, but in courses that included much sociological content. Conclusions about students are based on their written reflections to open-ended questions (See Appendix).

In my criminology and social deviance courses, I assigned a police ride-along, an oft-used assignment, but one that can be a unique experience depending on the readings assigned and emphasis placed on reflection. Given the less structured nature of this participation-observation, I gave students the option of selecting another assignment, such as relating readings to selected films. Therefore, a subset of the class (7 students in criminology and 10 students in social deviance) signed up for ride-alongs with their choice of police organization: a suburban city, an urban city, the state patrol, or the university's force. Students read about policing methods and contextualized their findings within the readings, presenting their analysis to the class. Some students chose to develop their presentations further into a final paper for the course.

I took two steps to minimize the chances of data fabrication. First, I stressed that there was nothing that they "needed" to see. Routine patrolling is just as significant in understanding policing as apprehending a suspect. In this manner, I hoped to create a classroom climate wherein students did not feel pressured to fabricate results. Additionally, I asked all students to turn in their field notes for a grade, and to attach a signature or business card from the officer they accompanied. Other instructors may prefer to check back with the site to determine if students performed the participant-observation.

In science, technology and work, a small seminar about sociological and historical understandings of labor, all five students read several articles on service industry work, including fast food jobs. I taught the students how to make detailed observations and write field notes. Next, I arranged a field trip to a local McDonalds, where students toured the restaurant with the manager. Students then wrote a short paper comparing their field notes with arguments made in the readings, and turned in field notes. The experiential component of the third course, scientific change, was organized similarly: all 17 students read sociological descriptions of laboratory work, learned field note-taking techniques, and toured a local scientist's biological research lab. They also wrote a short paper and attached field notes.

Overall, students rated these assignments favorably. Benefits mentioned by most students (82.0%) were substantive; students wrote that their stereotypes about the subject matter decreased while their level of knowledge increased. Referring to the McDonalds assignment, one student wrote:

This was a great assignment, the best so far this semester. Scheduling the tour of McDonalds was a fantastic way for us to get an inside-out view of the company....I highly recommend that you assign this project to future classes. The assignment combined creativity with research and writing skills, while letting us observe first-hand the tremendous influence of technology in the workplace. I was both interested and impressed with the assignment.

Students in all courses felt that the exercises made the material more "real" to them. As one student put it, there is "no substitute for seeing it in the field." For example, in the scientific change course, several students noted the biologist's excitement when he talked about his work, countering their stereotypes of a dispassionate scientist. Students in criminology and social deviance gained a greater appreciation for the hazards and stresses of police work. One student wrote: "I really dislike police. Simply the

thought of a police officer sometimes irritates me. My officer made me respect him more."

However, students did make several procedural suggestions for revising the exercises. The most frequently mentioned drawback for students (28.2%) was lack of adequate time at the site. This finding strikingly resembles comments by instructors, who also desired a longer exercise. I interpret these comments positively; instructors and students are excited by experiential learning and want to continue their involvement.

Students who completed the field trip assignments were commonly concerned (18.2%) with the difficulty of getting to the site. Students who completed ride-alongs most frequently mentioned the short time (a four hour shift) (17.6%), and lack of knowledge about dress requirements (17.6%) as drawbacks. This indicates that students prefer arranging some aspect of some exercises themselves, so as to complement their schedule, but they also want explicit instruction before they are sent out on their own.

CONCLUSION

Experiential learning benefits students, in substantive, methodological, pedagogical, and transitional ways. Short-term experiential assignments, such as observations, participant-observations and field trips, mitigate some of the drawbacks to long-term experiential exercises, but still elicit similar benefits. However, use of experiential education in a course does not ensure positive learning outcomes. Faculty must design activities to avoid repetitious or traumatic exercises, make extensive arrangements before the exercise occurs, and structure opportunity for student reflection into the assignment. Because of these considerations, many instructors who value experiential education in theory do not apply the techniques to their own courses.

I have developed the following guidelines to encourage reluctant instructors to introduce an experiential learning component into their courses:

- (1) Use short-term experiential exercises because they pose fewer logistical hazards than full-term experiential learning assignments, and thus require less time to plan. Short-term assignments maintain the substantive, methodological, pedagogical and transitional benefits of an experiential learning exercise of longer duration.
- (2) Be selective in the number of short-term assignments included in a course. The intensive use of one or two exercises works best.
- (3) Because of the often unfamiliar nature of experiential learning, structure the assignment to ensure reflection. Guide students with brief tutorials on data collection, expectations for dress and behavior at the site, pre-visit questions to initiate the students' critical thinking, and detailed expectations for the final product.
- (4) For larger classes, use a participant-observation exercise, assign students a role in planning and executing the assignment, or assign a GSI familiar with the site to plan a field trip. An additional possibility is to offer an experiential option in an assignment to avoid the logistical problems that may accompany full class participation.
- (5) Handle experiential learning associated with a potentially sensitive subject matter very carefully. Allow students a choice of topics, provide them with alternative assignments, and give them strict directions about how to avoid uncomfortable situations in the field.

Short-term experiential learning is a flexible instructional tool, adaptable to most courses. A course on race might include a discrimination testing exercise to uncover white privilege (Pence and Fields 1999), while one on class (Manning, Price and Rich 1997) or gender (Boyle 1995) could examine these axes of stratification through a trip to the mall. For a course on sexuality, instructors could use Chesler and Zuniga's (1991) pink triangle experiment, or Eichstedt's (1996)

exercise on public displays of affection. The writings of sociologist McGrane (1993a, 1993b, 1994) are excellent sources of short-term ideas such as an exercise asking students to examine the social construction of media images by watching television in

highly observant ways. Short-term experiential learning gets the instructor more for less, improving student learning outcomes while easing the transition into a new pedagogical technique.

APPENDIX: STUDENT FEEDBACK SHEET FOR FIELDTRIPS AND PARTICIPANT-OBSERVATION EXERCISES

1. Did the visit/ride-along help you understand class readings more?
2. Did the visit/ ride-along help you understand other class material or issues more? Which ones?
3. What did you learn from the visit/ride-along that was not covered in readings, class material or discussion?
4. Were there any problems with the visit/ride-along?
5. Would you recommend using this assignment for another class? What would you change about the assignment?
6. Other comments about this exercise:

Interview Questions for Instructors

1. Describe the exercise you used in your course.
2. Why did you decide to include this exercise in your course? What alternatives did you consider?
3. Based on your evaluation of the exercise as instructor/GSI for the course, what were the advantages of using this exercise? The disadvantages?
4. How did students react to this exercise initially? After its completion?
5. Would you assign this exercise in another course? If so, how would you change it? If not, why? What else might you do?

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