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HOW SOCIOLOGICAL LEADERS TEACH: SOME KEY PRINCIPLES*

This paper arose from a larger study designed to explore what leaders in the field of sociology think are the most important goals and principles for students to understand after taking a college-level introductory course and how they teach those principles. A population of scholarly leaders in sociology was defined by various forms of peer recognition and included elected presidents of national and regional professional associations, recipients of national awards, and recipients of competitive research funding. In 2005 and 2006 we interviewed a sample of 44 leaders to gain an understanding of key principles and how they are taught. We report their teaching strategies and compare their strategies to those of other teachers and the recommendations in McKinney et al. (2004). Although similar in many respects, leaders are considerably more likely than other sociologists to engage students in research and somewhat more likely to use simulations or games.

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COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY FACULTY often spend a great deal of time debating what courses to include in a curriculum but neglect to discuss how those courses will be taught. Yet, according to Bok (2006), what students take from a course depends more on how and how well they are taught than which courses they take. Because pedagogy is viewed as the personal prerogative of instructors rather than a subject for collective deliberation (Bok 2006), one way to begin discussion about pedagogy may be to consider how peer-recognized leaders in a field discuss their teaching practices. Leaders in physics and biology have been involved in discussions on teaching content and pedagogy, and there is a considerable literature about pedagogy in sociology. Sociological studies of pedagogy have taken four major forms. Some document actual pedagogical practices (e.g., Baker 1976; Bradshaw and McPherron 1977; Grauerholz and Gibson 2006; Howard and Zoeller 2007). Studies published in *Teaching Sociology* have examined the use of more than 100 teaching techniques, as noted by Lovell-Troy (1989), although many of them are

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Editor's note: The reviewers were, in alphabetical order, Morten Ender and Bernice Pescosolido.

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based on the experiences of a single instructor or institution. Other publications recommend desirable pedagogical practices (McKinney, Howery, Strand, Kain, and Berheide 2004). A fourth approach relates various pedagogical strategies to learning goals. For example, Lovell-Troy (1989) linked teaching approaches to Bloom's (1964) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*.

The most extensive and recent discussion of desirable teaching practices is McKinney et al. (2004), who stress that "departments should infuse the empirical base of sociology throughout the curriculum…" (p. 8), design curricular sequences "to develop students' skills in empirical and theoretical analysis…," (p. 14) "increase students' exposure to multicultural, cross-cultural, and cross-national content relevant to sociology" (p. 19), "recognize explicitly the intellectual connections between sociology and other fields…" (p. 19), "encourage diverse pedagogies, including active learning experiences, to increase student engagement in the discipline" (p. 20), and "offer community and classroom-based learning experiences that develop students' critical-thinking skills and prepare them for lives of civic engagement" (p. 22). In our analysis and discussion below we note points of convergence between these recommendations and the results of our research.

This paper arises from a larger study designed to explore what leaders (defined below) in the field of sociology think are the most important principles they would like students to understand and how they teach those principles. Thus, it is most like Lovell-Troy's in that we seek to identify the learning goals of leaders in the field of sociology and relate those goals to their teaching strategies. While there is a rich literature on the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) in sociology and while traditionally at least some scholarly leaders in sociology spoke and wrote about teaching, the pedagogical goals and practices of leaders have been largely unexplored in recent years. We think learning more about what peer-recognized leaders currently say about how they teach key understandings to undergraduates is worthwhile. We focus on the introductory course because, as Wagenaar (2004) notes, it "sets the stage for the sociology major and, as a service course, exposes most students to their only experience with sociology" (p. 3). However, the teaching strategies of sociological leaders have not been extensively explored in *Teaching Sociology* since the 1983 special issue on the subject. When asked how they teach their students the desired understandings, what do they say? Do their pedagogical practices differ from the actual and recommended practices of a broader range of sociology instructors and SoTL publications? These are the questions guiding our analysis. Exploring these questions may increase the dialogue on teaching and learning among all segments of the sociological community.

METHODS AND DATA

To obtain data, we defined a sample of leaders in the field and interviewed them about learning goals and methods. Consistent with Collins' (1998) view of the socially validated nature of knowledge and professional standing, we, in consultation with Carla Howery, deputy director of the American Sociological Association (ASA), defined a population of leaders in terms of various forms of peer recognition. We included all presidents of the ASA from 1997 to 2005; the presidents of regional sociological associations as of October 2005; national award recipients, including ASA dissertation award recipients from 1995 to 2005; recipients of the ASA Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award from 1995 to 2005;[1] scholars who received Fund for the Advancement of the Discipline

[1]Eleven years were included because one recipient was deemed ineligible.

[2]These awards are grants of up to $7,000 that fund "small, groundbreaking research initiatives and other important scientific research activities" (ASA Website 2006).

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(FAD) awards[2] from the ASA between 2002 and 2004; and those who were receiving research funding in sociology from the National Science Foundation (NSF) as of November 2005. The initial sample of peer-recognized leaders was 124 (Table 1). We e-mailed (or wrote to them if their e-mail was not available) asking them to participate as outside consultants in our NSF-funded study of what students should understand after having taken an introductory sociology course. They were paid a $50 honorarium for their participation. We kept their identities confidential by assigning them a code number that was used on the code sheets and after the quotations in this paper. Of these, 44 were interviewed by telephone in 2005 and 2006, asked whether they had taught an introductory class in sociology in the past two years, what they thought were the one or two most important principles for college students to understand about sociology after they have taken the introductory course, and how they taught those principles. Virtually all respondents were currently or recently involved in research, teaching, and/or scholarly publication.

Of the 124 respondents in the initial sample, we were unable to locate eight. Of the remaining 116, 13 disqualified themselves, saying that either they had never taught undergraduates or had not taught them in more than 20 years. Removing them from the 116 who were located, the final sample size became 103, with a 43 percent response rate. It is worth noting that the response rates among different segments of the sample varied substantially from 100 percent among Teaching Award winners to 33 percent among NSF grant recipients (far right column of Table 1). Grant recipients may be especially focused on research and may do less teaching, while teaching award recipients have a history of contributing to teaching. While research leaders may be focused on conducting research in sociology, they do not seem to be as attentive to research on teaching and learning in sociology. This might be seen as an empirical indicator of the "curious gulf" between teaching and research in academic departments of sociology noted by Goldsmid and Wilson (1980) and Purvin and Kain (2005). As one anonymous reviewer of this paper noted, the low response rate "stands in the way of SoTL receiving the place that it should in the academy." If true, it seems especially ironic that the research rigor of SoTL is affected by the low participation rates of fellow researchers and elected leaders.

The vast majority (86 percent) of respondents were in research universities, with 14 percent in baccalaureate colleges. Sixty-one percent were men and 39 percent were women. To protect confidentiality, we do not disaggregate the analysis by institutional type or gender. Six of the 44 respondents (14 percent) were recipients of the ASA's Distinguished Contribution to Teaching award.

To discover how leaders taught the important themes, we asked open-ended questions. We did not establish in advance a set of pedagogies that we were trying to count, as is done in surveys or traditional quantitative content analysis (see e.g., Altheide 1987, 1996). Instead, our goal was to identify strategies that were mentioned in the interviews. Our methods of data analysis were similar to those of ethnographic content analyses (ECA) discussed by Altheide and Glaser and Strauss's method of concept development (1967:2). Our goal was to obtain "clear descriptions and definitions compatible with the material" (Altheide 1996:17). After identifying these categories, we systematically tabulated how many times each method was mentioned.

The first step was to identify major themes that leaders hoped students would understand. While we extensively discuxss the nine themes identified in another paper (Persell, Pfeiffer, and Syed 2007), here we focus on how sociological leaders teach the principles they deem important and compare their pedagogies to those practiced or recommended in sociology.

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Table 1. Description of Sample and Response Rates

SAMPLE GROUP	Total Sample	Unable to Locate	Located	Disqualified Self	Adjusted Sample	Declined	No Response	Interviews Conducted	Response Rate*	Adjusted Response Rate
ASA Presidents (1997-2006)	10	0	20	2	8	1	4	3	30%	38%
Regional Presidents (as of October 2006)	9	1	8	0	8	0	5	3	38%	38%
ASA Dissertation Award Winners (1995-2005)	12	0	12	1	11	0	5	6	50%	55%
ASA Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award Winners (1992-2005)	10	3	7	1	6	0	0	6	85%	100%
ASA FAD Winners (2002-2004)	26	0	26	2	24	3	10	11	42%	46%
NSF Grant Recipients in Sociology (2005)	57	4	53	7	46	0	31	15	28%	33%
TOTAL	124	8	116	13	103	5	55	44	38%	43%

*When only non-locatables are subtracted from the original sample (N=116)
**When those disqualifying themselves are also removed from the original sample (N=103)

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RESULTS

Leaders evinced considerable consensus on nine major themes they hoped students would understand. Ranked according to the frequency with which they were mentioned, the themes are:

1. The "social" part of sociology, or learning to think sociologically
2. The scientific nature of sociology
3. Complex and critical thinking
4. The centrality of inequality
5. A sense of sociology as a field
6. The social construction of ideas
7. The difference between sociology and other social sciences
8. The importance of trying to improve the world
9. The important social institutions in society

We briefly describe each theme and then consider how leaders taught them.

1. The "social" part of sociology, or learning to think sociologically. Learning to think sociologically or grasping the "social" part of sociology involves helping students to get beyond the individual level of understanding and develop a deeper understanding of the social. This includes grasping what the social entails and the interactions between individual and macro-level forces. Leaders also deemed the impact of social forces on personal lives important.

Leaders mentioned several teaching strategies. Most use specific examples to help students develop such an understanding, including ones from health, the family, residential segregation, dating/marriage norms, suicide, and the life course. For instance, one leader gave evidence pertaining to residential segregation "as an example of structural factors" that influence society and the individual (#23).[3] Another leader drew on examples of norms to encourage students' development of a sociological eye. Suicide was yet another example used by a leader:

> I ask students, why do some people commit suicide? Ninety-nine percent of the reasons they give are individual reasons. I say that would be great for Introduction to Psychology. Then I try to show how a sociologist might think about suicide, in terms of belongingness, connectedness, embeddedness, all of which might explain suicide rates. I ask them, "Why are there patterns in the rates?" (#14)

Another drew on examples from the life course. S/he asks students:

> What happens to [you if you are] a single mom? How do early choices (or actions) affect you later in life? You may work less, work part-time, work at relatively low-paying jobs. You have no spousal benefits (whether pension, social security, or health care) and your own opportunities to save for retirement are more limited. Thus, you are more likely to be poor in later life. How is it different having a child at 22 vs. 37, not just when the child is born but when the child is college-age? How would your life (and the child's) look different depending on your age when the child was born? (#16)

Others stressed examples relating to students' personal lives. One said:

> I tell them, "You all say you're individuals. Now write down what most people are wearing today." (They're all wearing jeans, T-shirts.) So, is everyone really an individual? I ask them to think back to high school. Where did people group themselves in the courtyard and cafeteria? I give them readings and books. I tend to go to the other extreme, of downplaying individual things. I explain we want to try to understand patterns of human behavior … which include similarities as well as variations." (#14)

Another asks students:

> "Why are you in the class?" I want them to question the taken-for-granted features of life. What were their alternatives? Work, go to college? What are the social forces that reinforce one rather than another direction? What

[3]The numbers in parentheses refer to the respondent's ID number.

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> were the costs of each?…I also try to get them to think about social networks and analyze their own, and their own neighborhoods. We look at segregation. (#30)

In addition to using specific examples, several respondents drew on books or readings to facilitate students' understanding of the sociological perspective. As one explained, "I always liked using the book, *Invitation to Sociology* by Peter Berger, to show how sociologists think, how they look at the world, what their perspective is" (#37). Another said s/he tries to expose students to readings written from a sociological perspective and avoids using textbooks (#11). This particular leader mentioned Mills's *The Sociological Imagination* as a useful text for students. Yet another (#9) uses articles from *Contexts,* the ASA magazine. One uses texts by nonsociologists and explained "I try to give them tools in class they can use to analyze these texts" (#30). Finally, one respondent found inspiration in an address by the president of a regional sociological association. S/he explained, "David Snow's presidential address at the Pacific Sociological Association is excellent for articulating what sociology is and does that is distinctive (Snow 1999). It could provide an excellent basis for organizing an introductory course. I wouldn't have students read the article but would use it as a framework" (#37).

Besides readings and examples, a number mentioned assignments and classroom activities that encourage students to think sociologically, and many involved students in research. One noted, "I try to give them a sociological imagination assignment the first day or two. They are assigned to interview someone who is homeless, had a teen pregnancy, or is economically successful. They have to report on the person's understanding of their position and then contextualize that after having read part of Mills's *Sociological Imagination*" (#34). Another reported that s/he gives students an assignment called a sociological autobiography in which the students must examine "how they ended up here at this particular school" (#32). A professor teaching an undergraduate course on aging indicated that s/he has students interview an older person (neighbor, friend, family member) and ask them about key events and transition points in their lives. What was their age at the time of certain events (marriage, first child) and what year was it in history? (#16). S/he elaborated, "I have them do an exercise in the community, e.g., go to a cemetery and check the ages at which people in different generations died. What was the age of their children? How many wives did a man have?" (#16).

Others used in-class exercises. As one said, "I have some quizzes I do in class, e.g., on the myths of aging, e.g., what percent of people over 65 are in nursing homes? I ask them to answer the quiz, and then give them the answers." (#16). Another used writing exercises to get students thinking about sociological perspectives (#11). Someone else used remote control technology ("clickers") in large classes to encourage a sociological perspective:

> [I use the] Classroom Performance System. It's a testing tool or quizzing tool or attendance tool. I basically use it to show them that they are whiter than the rest of the country, wealthier than the rest of the country. It is interesting to show them statistics they are divorced from . . . . I show them, for example, that whereas 12 percent of the United States [population] are from households that make $100,000 or more . . . 50 percent of my students are [from such families]. I use the remote control to make them think about themselves sociologically. (#20)

2. The scientific nature of sociology. The scientific aspect of sociology was the second most frequently mentioned understanding that leaders wanted students to get from an introductory sociology course. As one said, "Thinking about the social requires self-conscious attention to methods. How do we know what we know? If they read something in the paper, I want them to ask, "How do they know that?" (#17). When

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asked how they teach the scientific nature of sociology, respondents' comments clustered around three approaches: directly exposing students to research in class, having students do research and/or projects themselves, and developing helpful materials to guide them in conducting and writing up their investigations. A number mentioned talking in class about research design and understanding causality and what is needed to infer it. Others stressed having students read real sociological studies. Another reviews the methods used in the sociological studies read. At least one mentioned "bringing my own research into the class" (#8). Someone else said, "I teach students about data analysis, teach them to take numbers to answer questions. I want them to understand the different kinds of evidence that you can get about an issue. I describe research to them. I look at examples, such as how you would get at racial disparities among prison populations" (#13).

Leaders also involve students in a research study involving data. One stressed the importance of students being "active learners" by having them "do active research" (#33). Another did this by using the Integrated Data Analysis (IDA) modules developed by the ASA (#8). A third reported, "I have every student do a survey. They have to actually go interview their own ten people and write up the results in a group. The final report is a group project. Then they do an ethnographic field project where they go out in the field and observe social interaction in some public setting . . . . The virtue of that to me is it gives them some direct understanding of how social science data are created and the validity of such data" (#9).

In the course of working with students on projects, issues of sociological reasoning and argument invariably arose. Several stressed "the importance of evidence and support for statements, having a clearly developed argument and data that bears on it" (#23). One said they taught this "[l] argely by forcing students, especially with respect to causality and basic social science reasoning, not to say things without substantiating them. I want them to provide evidence, I want connections between the evidence, and I want them to think critically about the kind of evidence they have to support certain statements." S/he did this to "keep them from engaging in dueling anecdotes" (#26). One leader (#10) went so far as to prepare a four-page handout for students entitled "Making a Sociological Argument," in which s/he made the distinction between simply summarizing the findings in an existing research paper and using those findings to make a new argument.

In short, those stressing the importance of the scientific nature of sociology tried to achieve that goal using direct exposure, active involvement in research, and help for students struggling to learn how to marshal evidence to support a research question or argument. Their efforts are consistent with two recommendations in McKinney et al. (2004). First, it is consistent with Recommendation 4: "Departments should infuse the empirical base of sociology throughout the curriculum, giving students exposure to research opportunities across several methodological traditions, providing repeated experiences in posing sociological questions, developing theoretical explanations, and bringing data to bear on them" (p. 8). Second, it is congruent with Recommendation 6: Departments should design curricular sequences "to develop students' skills in empirical and theoretical analysis . . ." (p. 14).

3. Complex and critical thinking. Most leaders considered complex and critical thinking to be an important learning goal and believed that teaching students to ask questions about factors that are not immediately apparent would increase their intellectual development. They stressed the importance of *all* college students learning skills that allow them to look beyond "black and white" interpretations; they noted the importance of being aware of multiple perspectives, whether historical, cultural, or something else, in keeping with Recommendation 9 in McKinney et al. (2004) that

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"[d]epartments should structure the curriculum to increase students' exposure to multicultural, cross-cultural, and cross-national content relevant to sociology" (p. 19).

Strategies for teaching complex and critical thinking varied. Some leaders focused on students' ability to write papers that logically develop and support an argument, while others emphasized the importance of simply exposing students to activities that developed these skills, such as reading the newspaper critically or discussing issues in class. One said:

> [I] spend a lot of time trying to figure out why it is that . . . In the United States, in comparison to other countries . . . we don't have a more generous welfare state? . . . [I'm] trying to get the students to think in more complex ways, in this case about political inequality and social provision. (#35)

For this respondent, critical thinking involves moving beyond obvious explanations or surface understandings to develop a more complex, multifaceted understanding. Others stressed helping students to question the research they read, and "critically analyze [it] for empirical flaws" (#31).

4. The centrality of inequality. Leaders described an understanding of social inequality and stratification as a key learning goal in sociology. This included recognizing various inequalities, both in the United States and globally, tying stratification into social structures and individuals' location in them, as well as seeking the sources and consequences of such inequality. They used a wide variety of methods to do this.

Most commonly, they mentioned in-class exercises or games. To facilitate students' understanding of social class differences, one used an exercise that divided the class into small groups and then assigned each group different budgets to use in planning a night out in order ". . .to talk about class differences" (#42).

Another explained that graduate teaching assistants in his/her sociology department had a large battery of in-class exercises and games for recitation sections that the TAs passed down to one another from year to year. Some of these exercises deal with inequality, such as:

> a "Who Shall Survive?" exercise that's been done for years for stratification . . . . You spend about a 30- or 40-minute session basically saying, here are some social categories. You put them on the board, and you say, okay, who gets to survive? And what it teaches is that people in the group (a) have different priorities, but (b) tend to reward one of two principles, either what they perceive to be functional contributions—you get the functional theory of stratification out of it. Or, alternatively, sort of social protection—do you protect the weakest? Those two are competing principles, and the class basically divides around one or the other, [and it becomes] an ethics of stratification debate. (P. 9)

Another described a very similar game called "Bomb Shelter," where the instructor gives students brief bios for 15 people, and the class must choose seven of those people to survive. S/he elaborated, "How do they decide? How do we value and rank people? These are some of the questions [students] discuss" (3). Finally, one mentioned using a variation of the classic *Monopoly* game to teach students about inequality (see Jessup 2001), explaining, "I assign them to play 'real-life Monopoly' and they see that the person at the low end [of the socioeconomic spectrum] does not make it around the board; the person at the top always wins. They start to realize the privileges they have had and confront them in a way that is not confrontational" (#34).

Besides in-class exercises and games, several leaders discussed the strategic use of films for teaching inequality, including: *Hoop Dreams*, *Seven-Up*, *Eyes on the Prize*, *Affluenza*, *Cheyenne Warriors,* and *People Like Us*. As one elaborated:

> [T]he film *Hoop Dreams* . . . [encourages one to] think about how race, poverty, and social decline in the inner city . . . interact and intersect with one another to produce this context . . . . The surface story is about basketball, which [makes it] a dynamic film . . . . It's about

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> young African-American basketball players in Chicago as they go through high school and into college. (#35)

Specific examples, both comparative and historical, were used by two leaders to demonstrate the salience of inequality. As one explained:

> We talk about the caste system of India, the Burakumin of Japan,[4] feudalism. This is a way they can come to understand structure, stratification, and relations between groups of people. Then I move into U.S. society, where we have so much invested in the idea of the individual. We don't see relations between groups, we see ... who thrives and who doesn't as resulting from individual attributes rather than social relationships. Students find the caste system [in India] very fascinating. We need contemporary readings on it. This helps to introduce the complexities of stratification systems. (#6)

Another draws on the *Titanic* shipwreck to demonstrate social structure and inequality, explaining that "students can see easily how different chances of survival are related to social class and social structure. The structure of the boat literally determines life chances, just as social structure affects health, death, college, and other outcomes" (#2).

While class discussion appears to occur in many of these examples, two respondents specifically mentioned using class discussion as a strategy. For example, one leader tries to develop in students an understanding of the multiple perspectives on various problems:

> [W]hen we look at why some occupations pay more than others, one of the things that we do is to figure out, what are the kinds of factors that contribute or cause one occupation to pay more than others. Now, one simple answer, the kind of Davis and Moore classical structural functionalism answer . . . occupations that are best paid are the ones that are most important to society. And then we start talking about, could that really be true? Could it be the case that occupations that we all know are very well paid are truly the most important ones for society to function? Well, if that's not the case . . . , what are some of the other dynamics that could be behind this inequality in pay across occupations . . . . In the process of doing that, I try to come back to general sociological perceptions of what is required to develop explanations of particular sociological phenomena. (#35)

Only one explicitly mentioned lecturing, noting, "I talk about inequality. I discuss class equality (or inequality), race and gender inequality" (#24). Two respondents discussed using visual charts or tables of empirical data on inequality. One explained, "I provide students with a visual representation of income inequality" (#24). Another reflected, "I use tables in the [course text]book and put them on PowerPoint slides. I really try to hit students empirically" (#34).

Two others use research projects to teach inequality. As one elaborated, "I developed a stratification project, a field project, in which students are assigned to a social class. They research what life is like for their assigned class and gather information about activities like buying a car, getting a loan, etc." (#8). Similarly, another explained, "I require a paper where the students have to go observe two groups of people, one of which they think is more [oppressed]" (#4).

Only one mentioned specific readings for teaching inequality, in particular the "No Nonsense Guides" to various subjects, including Poverty and Globalization. S/he explained that these books are "beautifully written, but quite polemical, so they need to be balanced with more solid books" (#4). Also, s/he noted that students rate these books very highly in course evaluations.

While discussing various methods for teaching inequality, several leaders indicated that their students resisted the idea of inequality (also noted by Davis 1992). As one stated, "A lot of students don't believe that there is inequality" (#34). Another explained, "This is a relatively conservative

[4](Wagatsuma and Totton 1966)

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state and school. When I came here, there was resistance to inequality" (#24). The first respondent mentioned that s/he uses games and empirical data on inequality to deal with students' resistance. The second changed course content, saying, "When I stopped using Marx's name in the class, students were a lot more receptive to the ideas" (#24).

5. An introduction to sociology as a field. Interviewees spoke about several ways of introducing their students to the field of sociology. One concentrates on answering three questions that s/he defines as central: "What is society?" "What is sociology?" and "What do sociologists do?" (#44) Several used the photo essays and articles from the ASA magazine *Contexts*. Many leaders emphasized the importance of designing and executing research projects. Several believed that this essential task allowed students to apply what they had learned about sociological concepts and demonstrate their understanding of sociological methods. One developed a specific research project where students interviewed other students on campus, asking them how they ended up in a particular field or major. Students then presented the results to the university administration, giving students valuable research and presentation experience that mirrors the work of professional sociologists. Another leader stated, "I try to introduce [students] to the discipline as a discipline, so they can see the profession as a social entity, with departments, journals, positions, etc." (#17).

6. The social construction of ideas. Several respondents mentioned social constructionism as a key principal. They see it as entailing the recognition that social concepts and phenomena that are often viewed as "natural" or taken for granted (including race, gender, sense of time, or human nature) are actually reflective of social forces and structures and consequently vary over time and across societies. Many relied on cross-cultural and historical comparisons to illuminate social constructionism. One discussed marriage patterns and norms in class and how they differ across generations in the United States, using "clickers" to ask students to report the age at which they expected to marry and comparing their responses to the average age at marriage in earlier generations. Another used the example of love and marriage:

> To us it seems natural that they go together. But, just feeling it is natural doesn't make it so. The feeling is real, but we can explain where that feeling comes from and why it might be different in other societies. Our sense of time is another example of this, as are categories or ideas about race or gender. They differ across societies. I teach this through cross-cultural and historical contrasts. Gender, for example, seems very natural, even genetic, but gender structure varies by culture and society. (#17)

Another compares the conception of self across different cultures. S/he considers the Taoist notion of the self, where self and society are co-configured. One source s/he used is the work of Deborah Woo. In the Kimura case of parent-child suicide where the parent did not die, the parent was tried for murder [in the United States] (Woo 1989). However, that parent had an integrated conception of his/her self and the child's self. S/he draws on this example to dramatize how deeply ingrained ideas of individualism are in U.S. culture compared to other cultures (6).

Leaders draw on various texts, articles, and films to teach social constructionism. One uses Berger and Luckmann's book *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). Another explained that s/he draws on various empirical articles related to age norms that depict a "social clock" of when people should do certain things in their lives, for example, in an article by Settersten and Hagestad (1996) in *The Gerontologist* that investigates cultural age deadlines related to various family transitions. Another expressed a desire for students to understand the argument of "race as a social construction" and showed the California Newsreel film, *Race: The Power of an Illusion,* to

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build students' understandings.

7. The difference between sociology and other social sciences. Several interviewees noted the importance of teaching the difference between sociology and other sciences. This idea was often taught by first defining a sociological approach and then juxtaposing that view with the approach taken by another field. One summarized, "I lecture in a comparative sense demonstrating differences between the approaches of sociology and other fields" (#11). Another discussed the use of an intra-disciplinary approach to teach this principle. By using a subfield of sociology, s/he demonstrates the points at which the fields converge but also the differences in their approaches to a given intellectual question:

> I think that economic sociology is very much a field that is in dialogue with economics . . . . Economics does have this view of . . . the subject matter, the economy and so forth, being really a separate arena of social action with different principles . . . . What I do in structuring a course is . . . take a series of concepts that are essentially considered to be economic in nature, so things like markets, consumption, production, the firm . . . [then we] think about markets, for example, containing culture or politics, rather than being an arena that is separate from culture and politics . . . . (#10)

This leader uses an exercise taking a sociological approach to taxation, allowing students to bring a topic seen primarily as of concern to another discipline into the realm of sociological study:

> [Taxation has] implications for family formation and the kinds of families that people live in. There are implications for inequality and transmission of inequality across generations. There are implications for social welfare provision and how societies take care of people who are disadvantaged. There are implications for how . . . we achieve all kinds of social objectives as in education, etc. . . . [I give them a 1040 tax form and ask] how can they read that sociologically? How can they in some way view it as an artifact of the kind of society we live in and something that is shaping the social arrangements that we have? (#10)

This example illustrates one way that Recommendation 10 from McKinney et al. might be included in teaching: "Departments should structure the curriculum to recognize explicitly the intellectual connections between sociology and other fields . . ." (p.19).

8. The importance of trying to improve the world. Several leaders wanted to convey that sociological knowledge could help to improve the world. One said, "I think sociologists must have a clear goal of promoting social change for the well-being of the entire human species" (#27). Of the interviewees mentioning this goal, most were very passionate about it. One stressed the importance of giving privileged students an ethical perspective on various social issues, stating:

> I take as a starting assumption the premise from the International Declaration of Human rights that all people have equal rights to health, education, etc. This takes us out of the individualistic perspective. Many of these students are going to become doctors or lawyers or work for NGOs (non-governmental organizations). (#4)

The same individual often assigns undergraduate students a service-learning requirement or option. S/he explains:

> In the community surrounding our campus there are many poor Latinos and Blacks. There are nonprofit organizations working with these communities, and those organizations work out the schedule for students to do service learning. What the students are learning comes into the course, sometimes in a very structured way, sometimes in a very informal way. (#4)

S/he also works with students involved in activist projects. For example, in the semester during the interview, this participant took students to a "Living Wage" campaign teach-in. Here the students spoke with a labor leader and learned about an ongoing struggle at their university with the dining room staff. The goal was "to instill in [the

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students] the idea that we can be engaged as citizens and have our voices heard and use our knowledge and . . . help improve the world" (#4). Another offered students the option of doing activist projects. These examples are congruent with Recommendation 12 in McKinney et al. (2004) that "Departments should offer community and classroom-based learning experiences that develop students' critical thinking skills and prepare them for lives of civic engagement" (#22).

9. The important social institutions in society. Discussing how they taught students to understand social institutions, several leaders mentioned using articles from *Contexts*. Study-abroad and cross-national comparisons were mentioned by others as generally important aids for student understanding of social institutions, as well as comparisons within the United States. Several respondents mentioned concrete examples they use in class:

> With respect to institutions, rather than just teaching about dating patterns, rather than focusing on individual level factors, we talk about the ways in which race, social class, and educational achievement narrow your pool. We talk about families in different classes and how people end up in different places. I talk about how although we don't have arranged marriages there are factors, such as where you go to college, which affect who you end up with. Your parents send you to find someone like you. (#8)

Another said, "I develop my concept map for what I'm doing in the course from the individual to the macro-level. I've been talking about 'what is health?' It's a big change for them to think about it from a social perspective" (#25). Thus, very broad experiences like cross-cultural exposure and very specific examples and exercises are used to help students understand various social institutions. Another stressed the pedagogical power of stories:

> [A]ll the stories I have from years of teaching. For example, I had a friend from Cameroon, Africa who told me about an American roommate in college whom he invited home with him to Cameroon. His father had four wives and so my friend had something like 44 siblings. When the roommate went there he was stunned by the experience. (#36)

Overall the methods used by leaders are consistent with two recommendations in McKinney et al., specifically Recommendation 5 that "courses should…[provide] multiple opportunities for students to develop higher-order thinking skills and to improve their written and oral communication skills" (p. 9) and Recommendation 11 that "[d]epartments should encourage diverse pedagogies, including active learning experiences, to increase student engagement in the discipline" (p. 20).

The leaders' goals and means are summarized in Table 2. They describe using examples, particularly cross-cultural or historical comparisons, case materials or data, having students conduct research and analyze data, preparing handouts to help students (e.g., "How to Read a Research Article" and "How to Make a Sociological Argument," both for an introductory sociology course), and lecturing.

How does the frequency with which leaders report various teaching strategies compare with that in four other studies of sociological teaching practices? Baker (1976) surveyed sociology department chairs in large universities, and asked about the frequency with which 25 different teaching techniques were used in their large sociology classes. Bradshaw and McPherron (1977) conducted a national sample survey of sociology departments, asking respondents how often different instructional techniques were used in their introductory sociology courses. In both of these studies it is difficult to imagine how respondents could really know what was being done in other people's classes. Grauerholz and Gibson (2006) analyzed 418 syllabi in sociology courses to ascertain the "frequency of stated pedagogical strategies and approaches." Howard and Zoeller (2007) conducted an exploratory study at a large urban university and its satellite campus in part to identify

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Table 2. Learning Goals and Teaching Strategies Used by Sociological Leaders

Learning Goal	Teaching Materials and Strategies Used
Thinking Sociologically	Examples, readings, writing, exercises and research activities, clicker technology, articles from *Contexts*.
Scientific Nature of Sociology	Exposure to research in class, doing research, teaching data analysis, reading studies, requiring evidence to support statements, providing helpful handouts.
Complex, Critical Thinking	Critical reading assignments, writing, going beyond the obvious, being critical of research, making historical comparisons, using international examples, cross-cultural comparisons.
Inequality	In-class exercises, games, films, historical and comparative examples, class discussion, lecture, charts and tables of data, research projects or papers, readings, recognizing and dealing with resistance to inequality.
Sociology as a Field	Designing and executing research projects, photo essays and articles from *Contexts*.
Social Constructionism	Cross-cultural and historical examples, readings, films (e.g., *Race: The Power of an Illusion*), clickers to illustrate norms.
Difference between Sociology and Other Social Sciences	Examples from subfields of sociology, e.g., economics, exercises, lectures.
Improve the World	Examples of how sociological knowledge can be applied, service learning option or requirement, activist projects.
Social Institutions	*Contexts* articles, concrete examples, study abroad, cross-cultural exposure, exercises, stories.

students' perceptions of the pedagogies most frequently used by introductory sociology instructors. Because different research methods were used, the evidence is not fully comparable (Table 3). Nevertheless, it still highlights some interesting differences.

These studies over the past 30 years reveal first that there is not total agreement on a taxonomy of teaching strategies. They also show that a wide range of teaching methods are employed. Some of the changes over time in methods mentioned may reflect changes in technologies, away from audio tapes and Computer Aided Instruction (CAI) and toward PowerPoint or clickers, and may also indicate a growing awareness over time of the importance of involving students in active learning rather than relying solely on lectures.

The leaders in this study are less likely to indicate they use lectures, class discussion, group projects, writing, films, and exams than are department chairs, syllabi, or students surveyed in other studies. However, the open-ended question we used may be less likely to elicit everyday activities, so little mention of lecturing or exams, for example, probably does not mean that leaders do not use these methods. Techniques such as lecturing are not likely to be mentioned in syllabi either. We have more confidence in the evidence when the leaders report using a particular strategy than when they do not, because a non-mention may be due to the taken-for-granted nature of certain methods.

The most striking difference between the leaders' responses and data from the other studies is the leaders' great stress on getting students involved in research. Sixty-one percent of the leaders spontaneously mentioned that they tried to do this in a variety of ways, including involving students in data collection, field projects, analyzing

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Table 3. Frequency with Which Various Teaching Strategies Were Used in Different Studies

Teaching Strategies	**Baker 1976** (N=83 departments, 229 courses)	**Bradshaw and McPherron 1977** Used extensively or occasionally (N=443 courses)	**Grauerholz and Gibson 2006** (N=418 syllabi)	**Howard and Zoeller 2007** Used "very often" or "often" (N=442 students, 2 campuses, 1 university)	**Leaders in Sociology 2005-2006** (N=44)
Data Source:	**Departments**	**Departments**	**Syllabi**	**Students**	**Teachers**
Lecture	68 percent	12 percent	Cannot tell	99 percent	36 percent
Discussion (in class or online)	41 percent	Not coded	79 percent	51 percent	16 percent
Lecture/ discussion	Not coded	81 percent	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded
Group projects, collaboration	1 percent (socio-drama)	Not coded	71 percent (both)	51 percent	16 percent
Readings	Not coded	96 percent	99 percent	Not coded	96 percent
Textbooks	Not coded	98 percent	Not coded	Not coded	5 percent
Writing	Not coded	69 percent	93 percent	53 percent	23 percent
Films, videos	52 percent	95 percent	29 percent	52 percent	21 percent
Student involvement in research	11 percent	Combined with independent study (below)	29 percent (data collection and analysis, non methods courses)	Not coded	61 percent
Simulations or games	3 percent	56 percent	Not coded	Not coded	18 percent
Exams or quizzes	Not coded	92 percent objective 86 percent essay or oral	71 percent	Not coded	9 percent
Slides or PowerPoint	13 percent	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded	11 percent
Field trips	Not coded	Called field experience	4 percent	Not coded	2 percent
Service learning	Not coded	Not coded	3 percent	Not coded	2 percent
Activist projects	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded	5 percent
Guest speakers	Not coded	Not coded	12 percent	Not coded	2 percent
Helpful handouts	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded	2 percent
Student presentations	Not coded	Combined with essay exams	40 percent	Not coded	2 percent

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Table 3. Frequency with Which Various Teaching Strategies Were Used in Different Studies (cont'd)

Teaching Strategies	**Baker 1976** (N=83 departments, 229 courses)	**Bradshaw and McPherron 1977** Used extensively or occasionally (N=443 courses)	**Grauerholz and Gibson 2006** (N=418 syllabi)	**Howard and Zoeller 2007** Used "very often" or "often" (N=442 students, 2 campuses, 1 university)	**Leaders in Sociology 2005-2006** (N=44)
Data Source:	**Departments**	**Departments**	**Syllabi**	**Students**	**Teachers**
Study abroad	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded	2 percent
Remote control technology	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded	2 percent
Audiotapes	3 percent	62 percent	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded
Experiential learning	Not coded	70 percent	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded
Field experience	7 percent	72 percent	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded
Independent study and research	(see self-paced study)	69 percent	Not coded	Not coded	See above
Multimedia	>1 percent	49 percent	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded
Modules	Not coded	24 percent	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded
Programmed learning	Not coded	21 percent	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded
Self-paced study	6 percent	24 percent	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded
Graduate TA	26 percent	26 percent	Not coded	Not coded	2 percent
Undergraduate TA	7 percent	12 percent	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded
Computer-Aided Instruction (CAI)	Not coded	18 percent	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded
"Clickers"	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded	5 percent
Other innovative techniques	Not coded	24 percent	Not coded	Not coded	Not coded

data, or other research projects. In addition, they mentioned exposing students to research in class (23 percent). To be sure, they were not all teaching introductory sociology, but neither were those studied by Baker (1976) or Grauerholz and Wilson (2006), so course level alone is unlikely to explain all of this difference.

The other pedagogical strategy leaders are somewhat more likely to use is simulations or games. Some teaching approaches, such as involving students in research, were either not asked specifically (in Baker 1976) or were combined with other techniques (in

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Bradshaw and McPherron 1977).

CONCLUSIONS

Leaders' goals are aligned with the teaching strategies they use. They emphasize the central importance of understanding the sociological perspective and the scientific nature of sociology. Almost two-thirds of them stress getting students involved in some way with research. They look for ways to connect sociology to students' lives, want students to be critical of what they read and hear (including research), seek readings that are research-based, use simulations and exercises in an effort to enhance understanding, and encourage students becoming involved in the wider community. Their teaching strategies are consistent with the pedagogical recommendations in McKinney et al. (2004). They are more likely to stress a new way of thinking about and investigating the social world, and less likely to stress the need to cover particular concepts or curricular content. Peer-recognized leaders were willing to discuss how they teach what they deem important for students to understand. By doing this, they have opened the door for further collective discussions of pedagogy in sociology and other disciplines.

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