

## 2016-17 CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING FELLOWS PROGRAM SUMMARY

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Spurred by student activism, the past few years have witnessed a resurgence in policy changes aimed at preventing sexual assault and rape on college campuses across the United States. This is evidenced by approximately 307 active investigations into Title IX violations at 224 colleges or universities (The Chronicle of Higher Education 2017). In my Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) proposal, I asked: What can a sociological perspective tell us about the social problem of campus sexual assault? Like others in our group, I took a ‘process’ approach, whereby I developed my originally proposed ideas while also being influenced by seminar discussions and feedback from our monthly Fellows meetings. Consequently, I framed my CTL final presentation in terms of maximizing rewards and navigating the risks of teaching a challenging topic like sexual violence. In the following summary, I highlight both theory and evidence-based assignments evolved in my *Global Gender Inequalities*, *Sociology of Gender*, and *Campus Sexual Assault: Sociological Perspectives (January-Term)* 2016-2017 courses. Ultimately, my aim is to publish this work in a future journal article and manuscript chapter on teaching sexual violence through theory and data modules.

**Pedagogy Discussion Reading:** Bohm, David. 2004. “On Dialogue.” Pp. 6-47 in *On Dialogue*. London: Routledge.

Classes I teach, like *Sociology of Gender* or *Campus Sexual Assault: Sociological Perspectives*, can result in “hot moments” in the classroom, so I spent time thinking about how to better navigate risks associated with a topic like sexual violence. Ironically, on the one hand, whether to include and practice “trigger warnings” regarding sexual violence in course content has driven a controversial debate in academia recently. Yet, on the other hand, there are few practical examples regarding how to teach this topic, especially in sociology courses (Gitlin 2015; Halberstam 2017; Hanlon 2015). “Do not avoid difficult topics simply because you feel uncomfortable dealing with them; at the same time, do not introduce controversy into the classroom for its own sake,” offers Vanderbilt’s Center for Teaching (2017).

In *On Dialogue*, Bohm (2004) illustrates that the root derivations of discussion and dialogue point to very different meanings. For example, ‘dialogos’, the Greek root of dialogue, combines *logos*, or “the word”, with *dia*, which means “through,” not “two.” Whereas discussion shares the same root with words like percussion and concussion, which implies analyzing and breaking up. As such, Bohm likens discussion to a game of ping pong where ideas are in competition with each other, while through dialogue, “everybody wins.” Bohm argues that the nature of dialogue builds an “impersonal fellowship” or “participatory consciousness” like that of English football fans who prefer to stand huddled closely together rather than in seats (Bohm 2004:32).

I put Bohm’s thoughts on cultivating “participatory consciousness” into practice by implementing several improvisation techniques from CTL Fellow Kevin McDermott, which mobilize and strengthen group dynamics. According to McDermott, “Applied improvisation is the application of the principles of Improvisational Theater to generate enriched engagement

within groups of all types.” In short, such kinesiology illuminates how “movement anchors thought” (Hannaford in Griss 2013). These exercises include: (1) “passing the clap” around a circle (e.g., making eye-contact and motioning to the person you are passing the clap towards in a circle), switching the direction of the clap from clockwise to anticlockwise around the circle, and passing the clap non-sequentially to a person other than those on either side; (2) telling a story around a circle after prompts such as “once upon a time,” “and every day,” “until one day,” “and because of this,” “until finally,” and “ever since that day.”; and (3) two students taking turns composing a letter, word-for-word, by contributing one word at a time.

Further, I researched some practical strategies, or how-to's, for creating classroom norms and maintaining dialogue during ‘hot moments’ in classroom exchanges. First, establishing and agreeing on class norms and ground rules for discussion is important. They serve to clarify expectations about class discussions early on and can prevent contentious situations later (Araji 2008). For example, students can be asked to understand each other’s perspectives before reacting to them. In other words, students restate the other person’s point before offering their own opinion. Agreeing on this practice as a classroom norm encourages greater dialogue over discussion. Also, the Critical Incident Questionnaire (Brookfield 1995) is a valuable tool which can help to lower the pressure if classroom conversations become heated.

**The Critical Incident Questionnaire:** (1) At what moment were you most engaged as a learner? (2) At what moment were you most distanced as a learner? (3) What action that anyone in the room took did you find most affirming or helpful? (4) What action that anyone in the room took did you find most puzzling or confusing? (5) What surprised you the most?

In sum, the section above represents meta-affective tools which assist with dialoguing ‘through’ difficult or emotionally-charged course content like sexual violence (Chick, Karis, and Kernahan 2009).

**Theory Assignment Workshop:** Critics of Title IX sexual violence policy question whether campus sexual assault should be adjudicated by colleges or universities under civil standards. Instead, they argue that such crimes be investigated and adjudicated in the criminal justice system. However, work by sociologists suggests that the nature of cross-examination is another form of domination over sexual violence victims. These theoretical and explanatory contributions by sociologists signal why so few sexual assault and rape cases reach the trial process.

*Theory.* Relative to other topics, there is surprisingly little sociological research on sexual violence and even less to teach such courses as I have considered above (Konradi 1993). Martin (2016) suggests that sociologists of gender migrate away from gender violence due to a combination of “pulls” (e.g., grant money on other topics) and “pushes” (e.g., Institutional Review Board requirements related to observational or ethnographic data). Historians, feminist philosophers and psychologists tell us that the topic of sexual violence is multilayered with discursive social meanings, practices, and implications in terms of sexual violation, control, and power (MacKinnon 1989; McGuire 2010). Consequently, students read interdisciplinary research on campus sexual violence examining the social construction of masculinity and femininity,

campus cultures, and power relations in victim blaming.

“Rape is the most underreported crime in part because the legal system works against a survivor’s favor. It has been said that survivor is raped twice: first by her assailant and then by the system through which she tries to do something about it. Unlike trials for other crimes, the complainant in a rape case often will find herself on trial to prove her innocence. Imagine how it might sound if a robbery victim were subjected to the kind of treatment that a rape victim usually undergoes in cross-examination?”: In the following situation, a holdup victim is asked questions by a lawyer. “Mr. Smith, you were held up at gunpoint on the corner of First and Main?” “Yes.” “Did you struggle with the robber?” “No.” “Why not?” “He was armed.” “Then you made a conscious decision to comply with his demands rather than resist?” “Yes.” As shown, the perpetrator’s actions go unquestioned. Instead, the victim is assumed to be at fault and must prove otherwise.

First, from both Professor Wade and Markle, I adopted new strategies to help students with their deep reading (Wade) of such scholarly articles. I grafted this think-pair-share/jigsaw active learning strategy (Markle) into several deep readings of key scholarly articles. Here, I divided the article into sections whereby student groups breakout to discuss then present their respective article section to the full class. In turn, other students were asked to summarize the article content to their peers. Further, I experimented with some meta-cognition strategies in Sociology of Gender’s paper assignment on Kimmel’s (2008) *Guyland*. For example, at the beginning of the course, I asked students to write a short written reflection on their baseline knowledge about sexual violence (i.e. statistics, rape myths) which they revisited in the final paper. As a result, their in-class questions were more sophisticated including one regarding institutional reporting on sexual crimes (see below). Additionally, this allowed some informative juxtapositions to surface, as one student wrote: “Consent can’t be given if alcohol is involved.” I encouraged students to contrast such assertions with evidence that 74% of rapes and 68% of attempted rapes involved an intoxicated offender (Fisher, Daigle, and Cullen 2010:72). Consequently, students wrestled with social meanings of alcohol, proving masculinity, and sexual assault in sophisticated ways.

### **Data Assignment Workshop: The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act Database**

*Data.* Psychologists have been instrumental in demonstrating that sexual victimization exists on a continuum from overt physical force (e.g., stranger rape) to sexual or psychological coercion like acquaintance rape or sexual assault (Fisher, Daigle, and Cullen 2010). Researchers estimate that 7 to 10 percent of college women experience forcible rape and that 14 to 26 percent of college women are sexually assaulted (Armstrong and Budnick 2015; Fisher, Daigle, and Cullen 2010).

The first aim of this assignment is to provide students with background on the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security and Crime Statistics. Second, by examining campus sexual violence data students acquire quantitative literacy (i.e., descriptive statistics and correct visual presentation of descriptive data in tables). This often tests students assumptions about sexual crimes on campus compared to other types of crime. For example, Trinity College has some of

the highest reports of sexual crimes compared to other campuses. Thinking about the relationship between data and facticity, this assignment stimulates discussion about how some data is, itself, socially constructed and may underestimate the true rates of sexual assault (Garfinkel 1967). Does that mean we are ignoring the problem or doing a better job of reporting than other colleges and universities? Here, students weigh what other forces might be driving such patterned underestimation and what other sources of evidence might reflect ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ institutional reporting environments. Above, the Campus Safety and Security Data Analysis Cutting Tool is maintained by the Office of Postsecondary Education of the U.S. Department of Education. This analysis cutting tool was designed to provide rapid customized reports for public inquiries relating to campus crime and fire data (including sexual assault, rape, and dating violence). This data collection is required by the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act and the Higher Education Opportunity Act.

*Assignment description:* 1) Visit the website for the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act and the Higher Education Opportunity Act. Describe the Clery Act’s history and other information you view as relevant from your search. Who was Jeanne Clery? What is the story behind this legislation? Be sure to cite your resources 2) Click on the Clery data link (<https://ope.ed.gov/campussafety/#/>). Select the option for data on one school. Enter Trinity College's name and City (i.e., Hartford). What do you observe in terms of sexual victimization numbers? Summarize this pattern in the second paragraph of your assignment, print these results and attach them to your paper.

Based on feedback from CTL Fellow Daniel Mrozowski, I will polish the above description with crisper language, especially in terms of verbs. Also, a compare and contrast exercise was suggested for this assignment which I will incorporate along with the readings below. Here, Clery statistics would be compared to another data set which reported the rape and sexual assault rates with greater accuracy<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Here, I am grateful to CTL Fellow, Maurice Wade, for recommending Stone’s *Policy Paradox* and Sean Cocco, Co-director of CTL for his suggestions.

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